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HELLRAISER: MEET THE NEW PINHEAD

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The Night She Came Home!

HALLOWEEN ENDS

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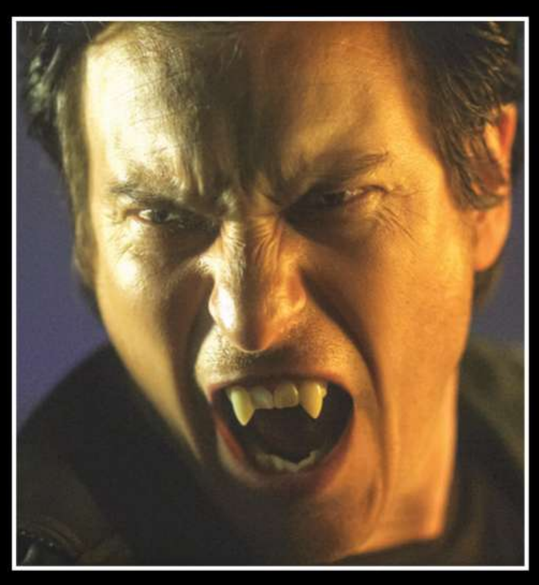
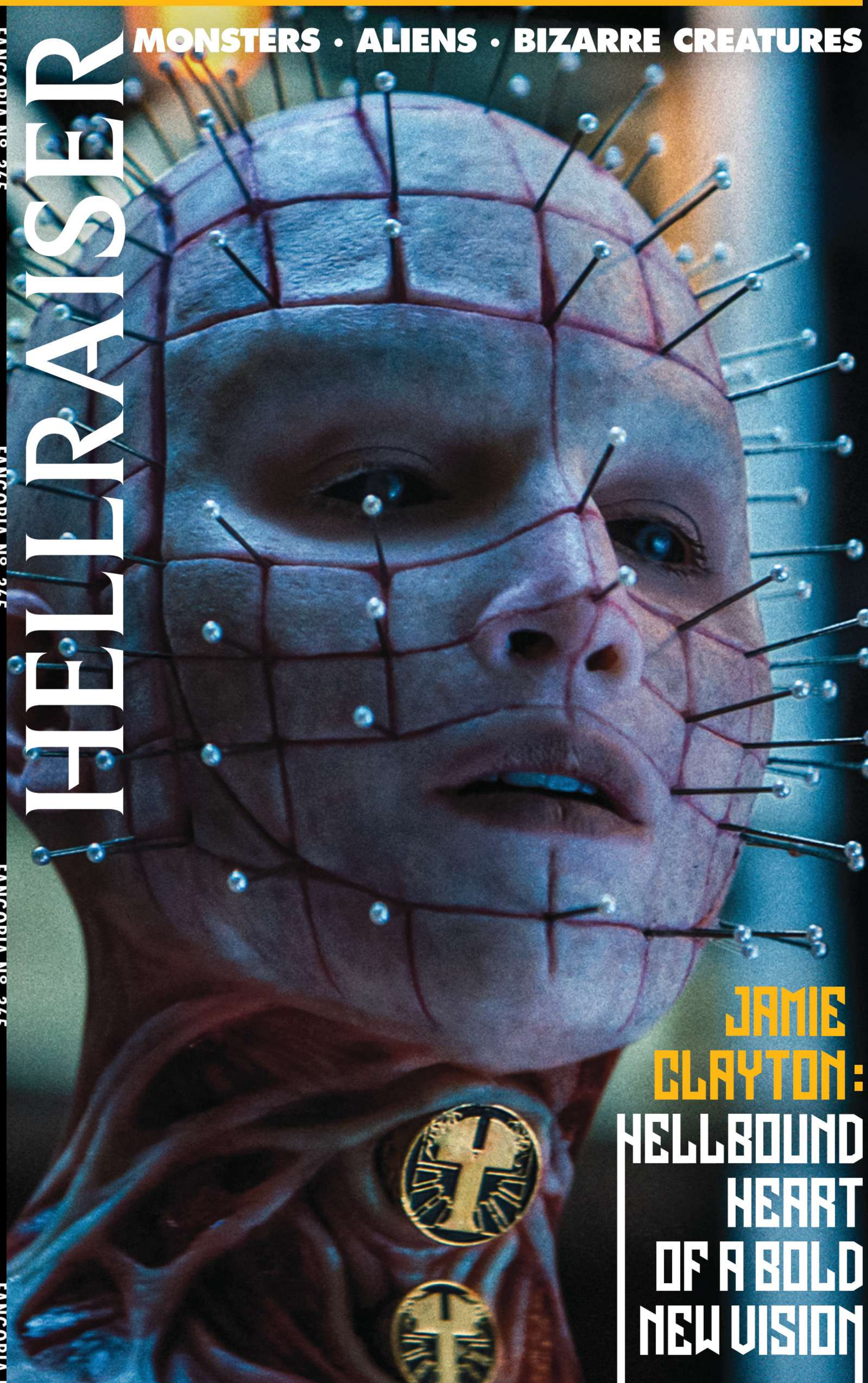


***BLOOD RELATIVES'* UNDEAD DAD**

***TERRIFIER 2:* NOT JUST ART FOR ART'S SAKE**



JAMIE CLAYTON: HELLBOUND HEART OF A BOLD NEW VISION

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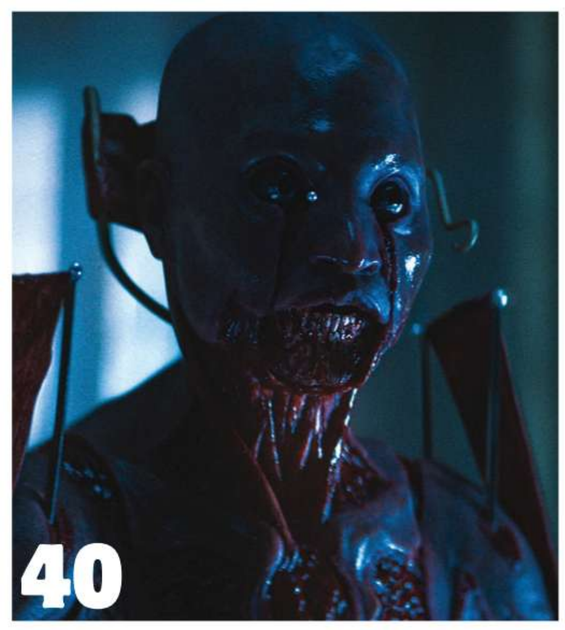

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This issue is dedicated to Clu Gulager.

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INVOCATION

Randy's Rules and Blayne's Bane

"There are certain RULES," Randy's famous horror movie speech in *Scream* begins, as he outlines the things you can and cannot do as a horror movie character. Of course, the genius of *Scream* was in the way it went about both acknowledging and dismantling Randy's rules, providing the one-two rush of meeting and subverting audience's expectations.

But as memories fade into memes, Randy's rules are often passed around without Craven's nuanced context and undercutting, and here in 2022 ol' Randy sometimes feels like Patient Zero of modern gatekeeping. "This is horror! This is how it works! This is how it needs to be!"

Also on that "rules" tip: as I was editing this here fall issue, Fango Contributing Editor Blayne Waterloo took to Twitter to oppose a sentiment I've seen too often during Halloween season: grouchy adults saying they won't give candy to kids who aren't in costume. Blayne wisely advised: "They're kids. You're giving out candy, not scholarships. Somehow the power of holding a bowl of drugstore sweets you bought for this express purpose has gone to your head."

Blayne's PSA reminded me of one particular '80s Halloween, which found me at a pubescent crossroads. I was (or I felt) a little too old to be trick-or-treating, but my friend Dan (the George Costanza of our group) was flummoxed by this, asking why on earth we *wouldn't* go door to door and ask for treats: "It's FREE CANDY!" he exclaimed at our lockers. Sound argument, honestly.

So I remember not dressing up for trick-or-treating, but it wasn't because I was lazy or trying to get one over on anyone; it was because I was taking a tenuous step away from childhood, and found myself staring down the barrel of "the rules." Today I'll get fully kitted out on October 31 just to hand out candy to the kids, but I also remember being the kid trying to figure out when it was "time to stop." Here in my dotage, I see that debate for what it is, and it's an old chestnut in a different candy wrapper: someone is celebrating horror in a way that's authentic to them and, like clockwork, someone's there to tell them they're doing it wrong.

In this very issue, I can't help but see parallels between Blayne's bane and the Rigid Randys who insist things must be one way over another. We have a *Halloween* sequel deviating so far from expectation that its star promises our readers it will "infuriate" some of them; we have a new *Hellraiser* that looks to shake things up in a foundational way; we have an indie vampire movie that might be the sweetest father/daughter comedy in years. And we're getting these things because the people who made them didn't feel boxed in by the often calcified rules of horror fans. It's a sloppy analogy, but I see in these shifts the un-costumed kid who's navigating the twilight zone between what was and what's next, who's in the process of becoming the next version of themself. Rules be damned – onscreen or on our porch, we need to have some empathy for those taking their brave, uncertain leaps, and remember when we took our own.

Phil Nobile Jr., Editor-in-Chief

The Postal Zone

People are always asking us how they can have their writing published in FANGORIA. Here you go!
This is your space to get heard, get loud and get opinionated. Brevity is preferred; having a point of view is required.
Hit us up at **MAIL@fangoria.com**

WORSE THAN NOTHING?

Richard Newby's primary point (in "Bad Miracles and Masks of God," Fango #16) seems to be that the worst horror is the void; emptiness and meaninglessness – but a close second is the miscreant masquerading as miracle. In some narratives, the Almighty turns out to be an ancient astronaut. Or worse. Now that's unnerving.

Kudos for his highlights from Larry Cohen's *God Told Me To* (1976), an unfairly neglected filmmaking feat which opens as a police procedure (bracketed, tellingly, by sacred chants), then introduces an androgynous angel with a rather unsettling message about the true meaning of existence – a purpose which makes nothingness consoling by comparison.

- Tom Simmons

I take your point, Tom, but I have to say that nothingness still personally scares the crap out of me. Show me a mad god, our insane puppet masters, some lunatic driving this bus, anything. Make it make sense. - PN

COME ON BABY, LET'S DO THE TWIST

I'm wondering at what point plot twists became a more essential ingredient of the films we enjoy. It's especially *Orphan: First Kill* that made me realize that at least in the 21st century, it seems like we expect bigger and better swerves. It's not just the "whodunnit" question, but the details sprung as traps to surprise, all the way back from the hidden and assumed identities in *Tourist Trap* or *Sleepaway Camp*, to the secret pasts of protagonists in *Glorious* or *Us*, and the twists of every *Scream* in between.

I wonder if this is just a natural evolution of media, or if stakes being raised on television programs forced movies to step up the shock and awe.

- Hub

Well, damn, Hub, this probably could have been its own article, but yeah! Like most overdone trends in entertainment, I find it's a safe bet to blame Lost. *- PN*

YOU CAN'T REMASTER NOSTALGIA

Just wanted to say I enjoyed the article "TV or Not TV" by Michael Gingold in #15. The part that really got me was about how people don't appreciate the quality of movies we have at our fingertips now. I remember many years ago my best friend asked me what horror movies I want that were not on DVD (this was when Netflix was one of the only few streaming services). I told him, and for my birthday he gave me VHS tapes of *From Beyond*, *The Horror Show* (aka *House 3*) and *Spookies*. I really appreciated the fact he searched for them and found them. We watched them with a bunch of friends and some people said the quality was so bad. Me and my best friend didn't care because we both knew how rare it was to watch these movies at the time. (Funny how they are all on Blu-ray now.) Unfortunately my friend passed away a few years ago but that will always be one of my favorite memories of him. Thank you for reminding me of that. - Radsavage

That's amazing. No format upgrade (or downgrade for that matter) can ever duplicate movie memories like that. All we can do is move forward and try to create more new ones. Thanks for sharing yours. - PN

WANTED! MORE READERS LIKE:

Josh Curzi (IG: @horrordaddy85) and Danae Platt (IG: @notjusthorror)

MONSTER INVASION

Run Sweetheart Run: A Different Kind of Final Girl

By Brett Gallman

HORROR HAS A HISTORY OF EXPLORING — AND EXPLOITING — FEMININE ANXIETIES. ARTISTS HAVE ROUTINELY POSITIONED WOMEN AS VICTIMS, PARTICULARLY IN FILM, WHERE THIS VICTIMIZATION HAS INSPIRED SCHOLARLY TEXTS AND ENTRIES INTO THE CULTURAL LEXICON. PHRASES LIKE "SCREAM QUEEN" AND "FINAL GIRL" CONJURE UP IMAGES OF BLOOD-SPATTERED SURVIVORS THAT REPRESENT EXPLOITATION OR EMPOWERMENT, DEPENDING ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO

Recent years have seen numerous women take control of this narrative with unrepentantly feminist horror films that confront the specific horrors women face, instead of mining them for schlock. With *Run Sweetheart Run*, Shana Feste tackles the perils of dating, staging a literal blind date from hell that turns into a harrowing struggle for survival against toxic masculinity — all while subverting the misogynistic pitfalls that have plagued the genre in the past.

Single mother Cherie (Ella Balinska) is hesitant to return to the dating scene. Not only is she haunted by a previous relationship, but her job keeps her occupied. When her boss (Clark Gregg) needs her to entertain valuable client Ethan (Pilou Asbæk), she reluctantly agrees, setting the stage for an unforgettably terrible evening that ends with Cherie battered and beaten, fleeing into the streets of L.A. with her savage date in preternatural pursuit. Wherever she runs, whether it be to the safety of her boss's home or a sanctuary run by a mysterious savior (Shohreh Aghdashloo), Ethan finds her, sniffing her out like a demonic pitbull, oozing male entitlement.

Run Sweetheart Run is a notable digression for Feste, best known for directing *Country Strong* and *Endless Love*. "This was an extreme departure," she says. "I'm not a horror director, but it's a muscle I wanted to flex."

Horror provided a natural space for Feste to explore both her trauma and the anxieties she feels

as a woman. "Being a woman is the living embodiment of a horror film," she says before revealing the inspiration behind the film. "There was a story that I wanted to tell, and it was based partially on a personal experience with sexual assault."

In Feste's hands, the genre became a means for empowerment, allowing her to indulge one of horror's purest functions — catharsis. "I was able to channel that anger and that experience into something incredibly triumphant," she says.

Being a filmmaker and a storyteller provides a unique opportunity to not only confront trauma, but also repurpose it. "You can write your own ending, and *Run Sweetheart Run* allowed me to get revenge in a way that felt entertaining and powerful," Feste shares.

While *Run Sweetheart Run* marks her first foray into horror filmmaking, Feste was aware of the genre's traditional treatment of women and sought to upend it, starting with eviscerating the male gaze. "I didn't want Cherie to look sexy when she was running or being attacked. I wanted her to look real," she says, challenging how previous horror films have fetishized violence against women.

A pivotal scene in *Run Sweetheart Run* unfolds with the climax of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* playing on TV, where a blood-soaked Marilyn Burns howls in agony and terror. According to Feste, the nod is both a tribute and a commentary: "I'm a Texas girl, and that was the first film that terrified me," she says. "That image has been burned in my memory, but what's exciting is that it's 2022 and we have a different kind of final girl." As such, Feste resisted dwelling on Cherie's victimhood. "I wanted her to be a badass," she says.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO - PHOTOGRAPHER MONICA LEK

DIRECTOR SHANA FESTE AND ELLA BALINSKA NAVIGATE A PARTICULARLY DARK DATING SCENE IN *RUN SWEETHEART RUN*.

> **I wanted Cherie to be a badass. She's an action hero in this film."**

"She's an action hero in this film."

Producer and horror aficionado Effie T. Brown echoes Feste's thoughts, revealing that she was drawn to the project because it tackles social issues and defies genre conventions. Citing her love of George Romero's films, Brown says she's "always looking for movies that talk about issues without being heavy-handed." For Brown, *Run Sweetheart Run* fits the bill because its messaging is vital. "It touches on things that spoke to my heart, and I knew it would speak to other women of color," she says before delighting in the film's treatment of Cherie. "Not only is she a woman of color, but she also gets to win in the end, and there are other women who actually help her. We're so used to victimization."

Feste's reluctance to revel in violence against women did pose a unique challenge. "I didn't want to shoot violence," she says. "I'm not into showing these intense scenes where Ethan is killing people, so how do I still make this film terrifying?" While she deployed filmmaking tricks to achieve this with music and clever camerawork, she credits her cast for bringing the terror to life. She raves about Asbæk's range, which captures the various faces of the

patriarchy. "Pilou is the blue-eyed devil, and he can play so many different colors — charming, sweet, menacing, terrifying." For Feste, Asbæk's "incredible depth" is a reminder that "misogyny is complex. It looks like your boss, your best friend, and sometimes it looks like the devil himself."

Brown and Feste similarly rave about Balinska's range in a role that tasks her with evolving from a demure office worker to a righteous demon-slayer for one night. "It's an insane arc," Feste says, and it's something she and Balinska were conscious of while filming. Not only does Balinska bring a compelling physicality to the role, but she's also instrumental in selling the terror. "When we reveal Ethan's true form, it's kept off-camera," she notes. "It's all on Ella's face, and her ability to convey this terror is a masterclass in acting." Brown particularly enjoys the "juxtaposition" between Asbæk's menacing presence and Balinska's defiant pluckiness. "We haven't seen a woman like this before," she says.

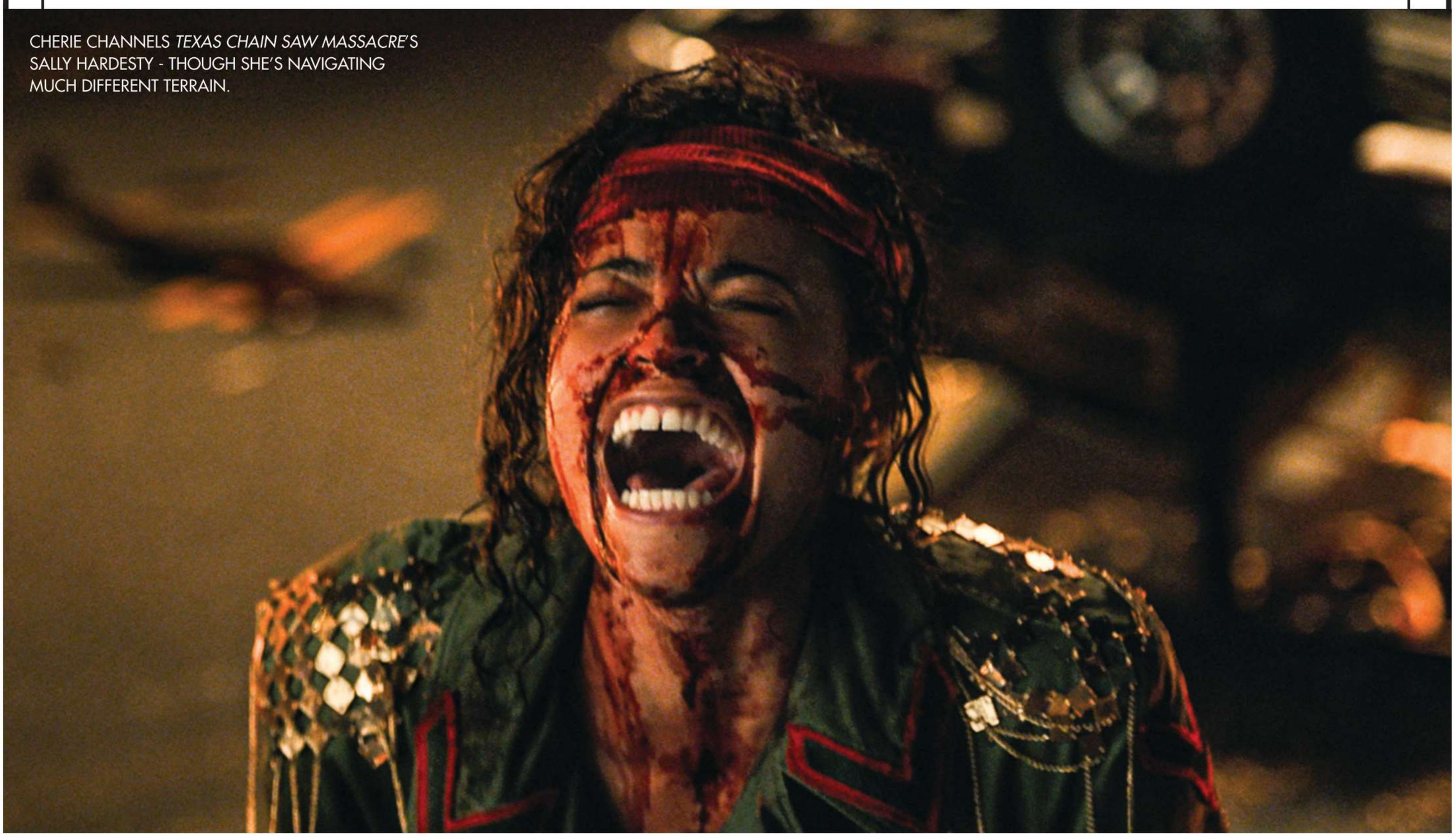
The producer and director are aware of the tricky tightrope that emerges when weaving social commentary through horror. While Feste hatched *Run Sweetheart Run* from a desire to reclaim her narrative, she also sought to make a killer horror movie.

"We started with a personal connection to the material," she says. "But because of Effie's love of horror and my commitment to the genre, we knew we had to create something incredibly entertaining." She calls the film a "really wild, unexpected journey," and with good reason. Cherie's ordeal might start with a grounded, believable blind date gone haywire, but it quickly unravels into a sprawling struggle for survival against an ancient, supernatural force, a sandbox that provides plenty of mayhem as Ethan plows through the city.

According to Feste, his uncanny relentlessness isn't just a compelling horror hook — it also reflects the omnipotence of misogyny. "That is what the patriarchy feels like to me — a power that's so vast and so difficult to defeat. There are everyday indignities and microaggressions that we face, and it becomes so scary that you just want to give up," she contends. "I didn't want it to be one man. His power needed to feel supernatural."

For Brown, this social commentary is a natural byproduct of timely and thoughtful storytelling. "Any good movie is usually a reflection of its time," she asserts, though she also offers that the premise of *Run Sweetheart* Run is "sadly timeless." However, both she and Feste hope it marks a change in the narrative for the treatment of women, especially women of color. "We had the opportunity to work with some amazing Black writers," the director says. "We created something authentic I could never have done myself."

Run Sweetheart Run will premiere on Amazon Prime on October 28. 💀



CHERIE CHANNELS *TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE'S* SALLY HARDESTY - THOUGH SHE'S NAVIGATING MUCH DIFFERENT TERRAIN.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO

JOIN HOSTS DR. REBEKAH MCKENDRY (PROFESSOR, FANGORIA, WRITER-DIRECTOR) AND ELRIC KANE (PROFESSOR, PURE CINEMA PODCAST, FILMMAKER) AS THEY TAKE A DEEP LOOK AT THE HORROR GENRE.

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The Waiting Game

At the time I'm writing this, the release of the Stephen King adaptation *Salem's Lot* has just been bumped a second time by Warner Bros., as part of the studio's highly publicized (and criticized) housecleaning under new CEO David Zaslav. Originally scheduled to open September 9 of this year, *Lot* was moved this past summer to April 21, 2023, and is now without a date at all. It's a disappointment for King fans curious to see what a big-screen translation of King's seminal novel looks like, after the pair of two-part TV movies.

This sort of development has become business as usual ever since the pandemic upended the film business, but it has been par for the course in horror for many years, ever since advance notice of release dates became part of the entertainment news cycle. Even when I was a teenager back in the '80s, the excitement of knowing just when a highly anticipated fright film was coming could be tempered by the word that that unveiling was being postponed. One of the first I can recall was another King feature, *Creepshow*; originally scheduled for July 1982 from United Film Distribution, the George A. Romero-directed anthology was bought by Warner Bros., which reassigned it to November.

A decade later, summer 1992 was supposed to host the release of Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness*. But in February of that year, producer Dino De Laurentiis sued *Army* distributor Universal Pictures over distribution rights to a *Silence of the Lambs* sequel, with *Army* being used as a bargaining chip. Raimi fans eagerly awaiting the director doing the Deadites on a studio budget had to wait, and wait, until February '93 to finally see it.

Behind-the-scenes shenanigans like this have bumped other films in horror's history; back when Warners dropped *Trick 'R Treat* out of its October 2007 slot (finally dumping it straight to DVD two years later), rumors spread that it was the result of a dispute between the studio and producer Bryan Singer over another picture. More often, the delays have been the result of production problems and/or post-production tinkering. The death of special effects creator Wally Veevers early in post, among other difficulties, caused Michael Mann's *The Keep* to miss its summer '83 date, emerging that December instead. A troubled shoot and a regime change at New Line led *Jason X*, shot in spring 2000, to enter a stasis that only ended in April 2002. Reshoots and other adjustments caused *The Wolfman* to shift out of its November 2008 berth and into several succeeding slots before it ultimately broke out in February 2010. *Case 39* was supposed to hit screens in February 2008 but didn't see the light of a projector until October 2010, bearing a new ending.

Changes in distributor can also have an impact. *The Cabin in the Woods* was produced by MGM, which planned a February 2010 release; that was scuttled by the studio's financial issues, and Lionsgate ultimately and successfully launched *Cabin* in April 2012. Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* shot in spring 2000 for Universal release later that year; then, certain that Zombie's shocker couldn't get away without an NC-17 rating,

(TOP) ENJOY THIS LOOK AT THE NEW *SALEM'S LOT* - IT'S ANYONE'S GUESS WHEN WE'LL GET ANOTHER ONE; ALL THE BOOMSTICK-POINTING IN THE WORLD DIDN'T HELP *ARMY OF DARKNESS* GET TO SCREENS FASTER.

Uni dropped the film. MGM picked it up, but objected when Zombie made an off-the-cuff remark that that studio had no morals, and *House* was homeless again. Here, too, Lionsgate came to the rescue and got the film out there in April 2003.

Looking over the examples above, it's clear that quality (or lack thereof) isn't always a factor when a movie gets bounced, nor does that necessarily guarantee a poor box office showing. (Rogue Pictures shifted *The Strangers* by almost a year, from July 2007 to May 2008, and wound up with a sleeper hit.) It can, however, play a bit of havoc when it comes to covering the films in the long-lead world of print journalism. I could tell you all kinds of stories about running articles in FANGORIA tied to announced release dates, only for the flicks to get bumped after the mags had gone off to the printer.

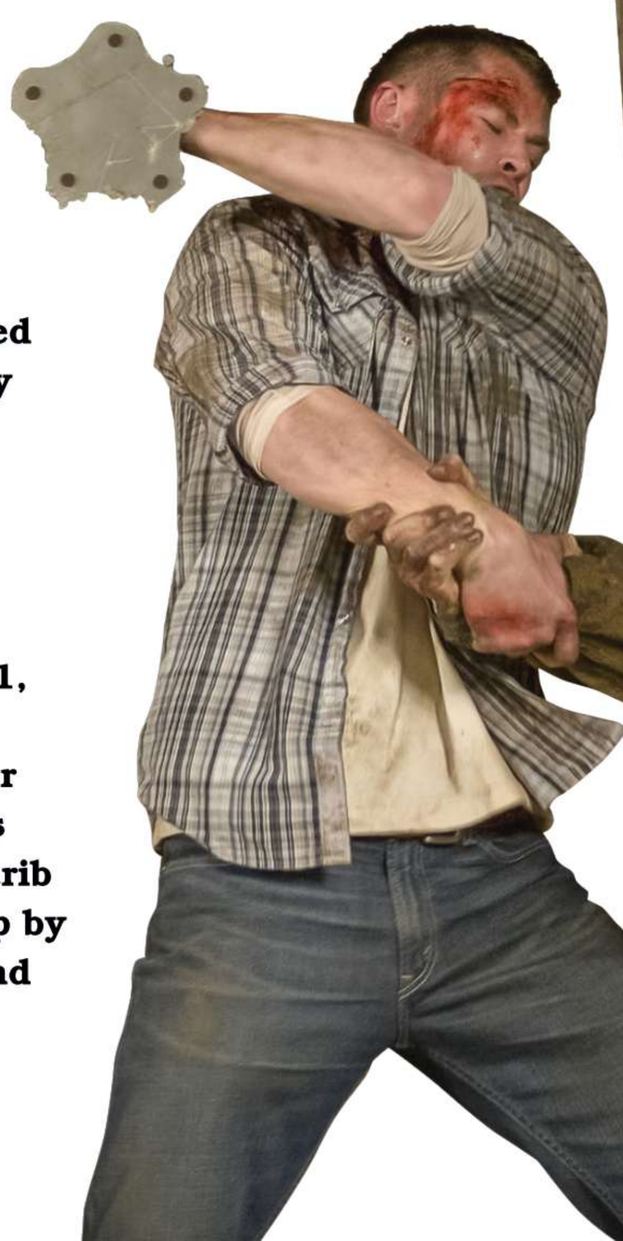
A lot of these tales would involve the Weinstein brothers' Dimension Films, which, along with parent company Miramax, became notorious back in the '90s/early '00s for its willy-nilly changing of dates. Sometimes these had to do with production and post-production travails, like the ones that pushed *Hellraiser: Bloodline* from April 1995 to March 1996 and *Halloween: Resurrection* from September 2001 to July 2002. After the Weinsteins left Miramax in 2005, keeping the Dimension banner under their new Weinstein Company, it was business as usual: Dimension acquired *Clown* in September 2012 and didn't release it until June 2016; announced *Demonic* for December 2014 but didn't put it out until August 2017; and first slated *Amityville: The Awakening* for January 2015 before it eventually haunted limited theaters and Google Play in October 2017. The Dimension production *Curandero*, which premiered at Screamfest 2005, was later dropped by the company and finally saw DVD distribution from (once again) Lionsgate in March 2013!

Other, more notable fright films have taken their sweet time getting from high-profile festival play to general release. Lionsgate grabbed *You're Next* at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2011, but waited two years to bring it to theaters in August 2013. *The Green Inferno* debuted at TIFF in September 2013 and was supposed to take a bite out of audiences in September 2014, but financial issues led initial distrib Open Road Films to drop *Inferno*, which was picked up by High Top Releasing and Blumhouse division BH Tilt and hit screens in September 2015.

Then there were the long travails of *The Poughkeepsie Tapes* and *All the Boys Love Mandy Lane*. The former, following its Tribeca Film Festival premiere in April 2007, was supposed to go wide via MGM the following February, but that never happened. After brief DirecTV exposure in July 2014, *Tapes* finally made its way to Blu-ray in October 2017 on the Scream Factory line. After *All the Boys*' well-received TIFF premiere in September 2006, it went from the Weinstein Company, with a July 2007 release announced, to Senator Entertainment, which then went belly-up, and then back to the Weinsteins, who sent it to VOD in September 2013 and select theaters the following month.

Finally, bringing things full circle back to King, there's *Cell*, based on the author's 2006 novel. John Cusack and Samuel L. Jackson reunited here from the King-film hit *1408*, but all that name value couldn't prevent the movie from suffering a twisted distribution path. It was bought by Clarius Entertainment in February 2015, but a planned release later that year was scotched and the company, now known as Aviron Pictures, dropped *Cell* that December. It finally saw Ultra VOD transmission from Saban Films in June 2016, with limited theatrical play the next month.

Whether these postponements last months or years, they can frustrate fans jonesing to see the latest work of a favorite filmmaker or actor, or the new entry in a beloved franchise. Devotees who didn't want to wait have often resorted to bootleg copies, which proliferated in the internet age. Personally, I've preferred to hold out to see these films on the big screen where they belong, and generally, that patience has paid off. After *Dellamorte Dellamore* was released in Italy in 1994, a number of friends caught it on VHS copies, legit and otherwise, believing there was little chance that Michele Soavi's zombie standout would see uncut Stateside theatrical play. But I held out hope, and was rewarded: October Films acquired *Dellamorte* and brought it, under the new title *Cemetery Man*, to cinemas completely intact — and with an R rating! 💀



CASE 39 (ABOVE) AND *THE CABIN IN THE WOODS* EXPERIENCED SIZABLE RELEASE DELAYS.

SceneQueen

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

HORROR MOVIES DON'T NEED MARQUEE STARS TO BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT DOES IT HELP?

BY BARBARA CRAMPTON

At this moment in time, it's safe to say one can't make *Halloween* without Jamie Lee Curtis. Her iconic presence is so intertwined in the series that Laurie Strode's name looms as large as Michael Myers'. Notably, the actress' value has helped to keep this already fantastic franchise spry in its latter years. So how much does casting a "name" for a movie aid in its success or failure?

Many times over the recent years I've been producing, this question comes up. For smaller independent horror films where directors are just getting started in their careers, distinguished casting is less important. The budget may not allow for it, and a director must typically prove their worth in telling a story before a name actor will sign on to a movie they're directing. Yet for bigger budgets and accessibility to wider audiences, having a star name in the cast can really push a project to the top of audiences' queues. After all, once you love an actor, their casting in a film can help cut through the noise of so many choices.

Nicole Kidman was an established star when she filmed *The Others*. Would that movie have been as successful without her in it? It was a ghost story with a twist ending, a generally well-received premise but not an entirely original one. Her performance won awards and elevated the material, and her name drove audiences to the film in the first place. Ethan Hawke's mainstream popularity, and the success he brought to *Sinister* and *The Purge*, means his involvement in *The Black Phone* virtually assured that film's viability, as much as the excellent writing and direction. Likewise, Nicolas Cage's association in a film is a sure sign of success these days. With beloved turns in *Mandy*, *Pig* and *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent*, we can believe that any movie Cage is in will be good, because he's so good in everything.

THE AUTHOR (SEEN HERE ON HER UPCOMING PROJECT WITH 1ST AD KIM BARNARD, CO-STAR JONAH RAY RODRIGUES AND DIRECTOR JOE LYNCH) FINDS HER ROLE AS A PRODUCER HAS HER LOOKING AT PROJECTS – AND THEIR CASTING NEEDS – WITH FRESH EYES.

PHOTO BY SAM INGRAM

But often you just don't have the budget to employ a big name.

When we filmed *You're Next*, Adam Wingard had been making very good but small movies – he hadn't yet made the leap to directing epics like *Godzilla vs. Kong*. *You're Next* emphasized a strong, scary story over star power. My presence might have helped a little, marking a return to my horror roots, but certainly the film would have been a great success regardless of my presence. In this genre, a terrifying or unique premise doesn't always require the known quantity of casting a star.

In *The Sadness*, a recent festival hit now streaming on Shudder, a familiar zombie takeover trope is made fresh with propulsive energy and a cast of relative newcomers. Writer/director Rob Jabbaz made such a daring debut that I believe he'll be able to capture the attention of name value talent for his sophomore effort. Will it help in the forward motion of his career? Probably. Will a more mainstream audience watch his next picture if it has a recognizable name? Definitely.

With *Glorious*, Rebekah McKendry's recent film I exec produced with AMP Films, having J.K. Simmons and Ryan Kwanten onboard really helped our visibility. Ryan is a star in his own right, a reliable and charismatic performer, and having Oscar winner Simmons in our film, even in a voiceover role, made people take more notice. Name recognition gets attention, and that's important in a crowded field – but it's important that the name makes sense for the character. I'm always disappointed when I see a movie where a famous person feels jammed in for notoriety's sake and doesn't actually benefit the character. Like a good shoe, the fit has to be right.

With our next film, the untitled H.P. Lovecraft adaptation directed by Joe Lynch, we wanted to find a great, well-known actress for the leading role, one audiences wouldn't expect to see in this type of film. Heather Graham hasn't done a lot of horror, but we created a part to attract a performer of her caliber, and she was excited about the material before we even started filming.

In this year's *Hellraiser* reimagining, up-and-coming actress Jamie Clayton will be seen as Pinhead. *Hellraiser* is a well-known and fiercely cherished franchise, and Doug Bradley is legendary in his performance as the original Hell Priest. But for this new outing, director David Bruckner, and writers Ben Collins and Luke Piotrowski, have proven themselves visionary filmmakers with the combined success of *The Night House* and individually on other projects such as *The Ritual* and *Super Dark Times*. And with powerhouse producer David S. Goyer onboard, this new iteration already has a strong chance at success, allowing some space for a fresher face cast in the iconic role of Pinhead.

I'm excited to see Jamie Lee Curtis in perhaps the final chapter of *Halloween*, and to see our new Jamie, Jamie Clayton, draw a bigger audience in this momentous role as the lead Cenobite. Star power can make or break a film at the box office, but in horror, as long as the script works and the scares land, I'm happy to be along for the ride. 💀

NICOLE KIDMAN AND NICOLAS CAGE BROUGHT STAR POWER TO *THE OTHERS* AND *MANDY*.

Stephen Graham Jones'

SLASHER NATION

The Shape from Another World

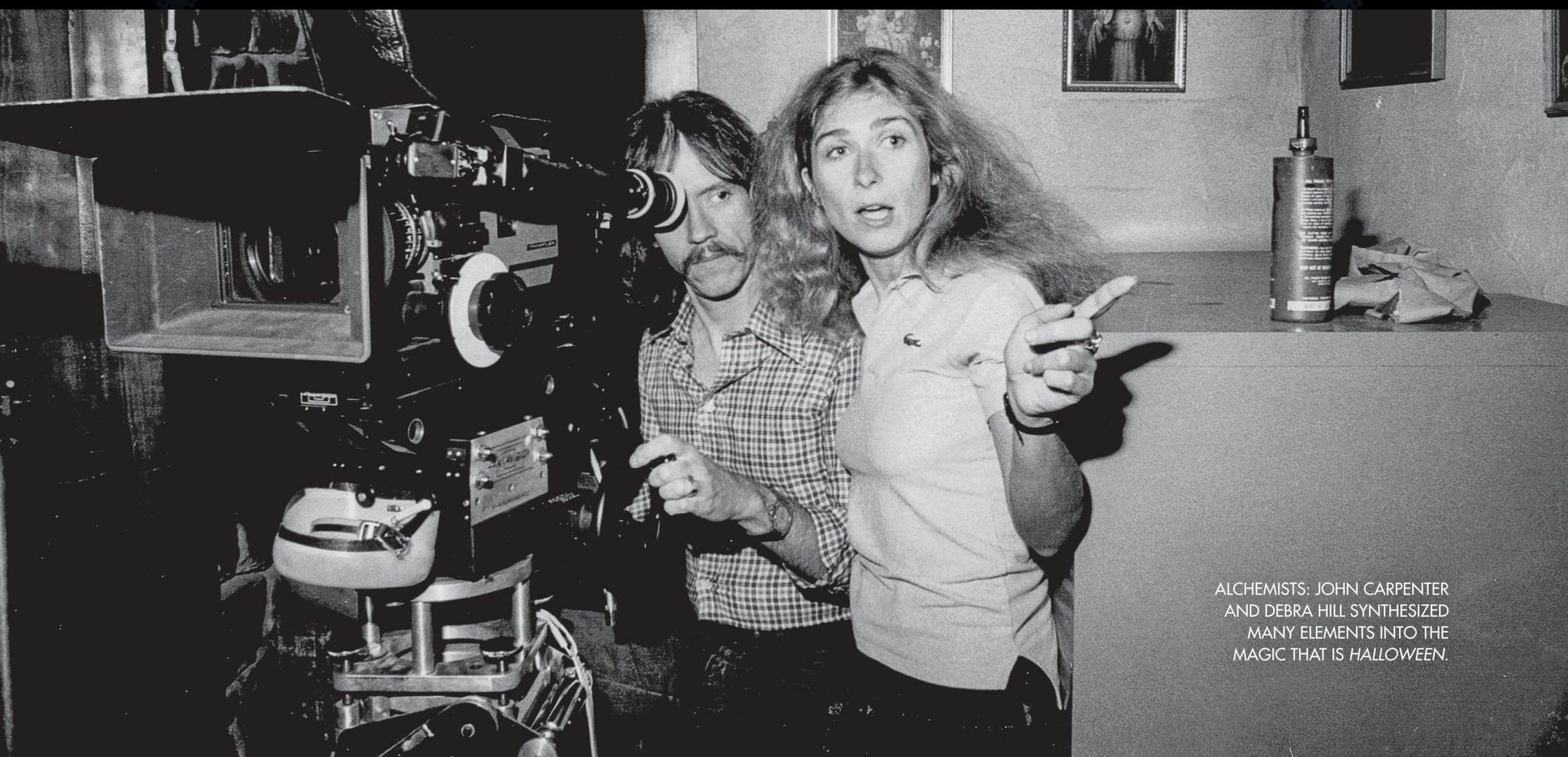
John Carpenter's *Halloween* was, among other things, a synthesis of genre elements that were in the air long before 1978.

Once upon a time, high up on horror mountain, there was a single film at the very peak that started rolling, crashing, getting larger and larger — John Carpenter's Halloween. It started what we now call the Golden Age of the slasher, which was largely a speculators' heyday: team after creative team trying to luck into something that would pay out like *Halloween* did, and maybe have the same cultural impact, too. What was the magic formula, though? What's the secret here? John Carpenter? Debra Hill?

A big part of it's no secret at all: ace writing and superb direction. Debra Hill made sure the characters spoke like people, not carving dummies, meaning we could care about them even when they weren't about to die, and John Carpenter did more with suggestion and atmosphere and shot composition and framing than most filmmakers can do with millions of dollars of budget.

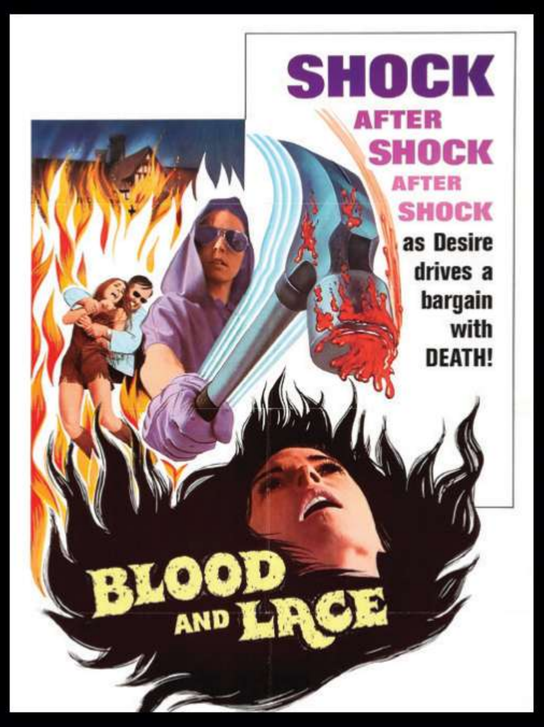
But *Halloween* didn't spring fully formed from anybody's forehead, either. Sure, Irwin Yablans had the initial conception of some babysitters getting murdered, and Janet Leigh's actress daughter just happened to be hungry for her first big role, and the tropes and conventions of the grindhouse were getting elevated into "prestige" horror that the audience didn't have to feel guilty for watching, but what really made *Halloween* hit was that, like *The Wolf Man* nearly forty years before, it synthesized and codified a lot of bits and pieces that were already floating around.

Which, again, isn't to take a single thing away from *Halloween*. It's the standard bearer of the genre for a reason. Weak efforts don't end up being the prototype, do they? Only the strongest, best ones do. To say it differently, the best survivors cherry-pick the strongest traits, and incorporate them into themselves, then duck through the door a completely new animal.



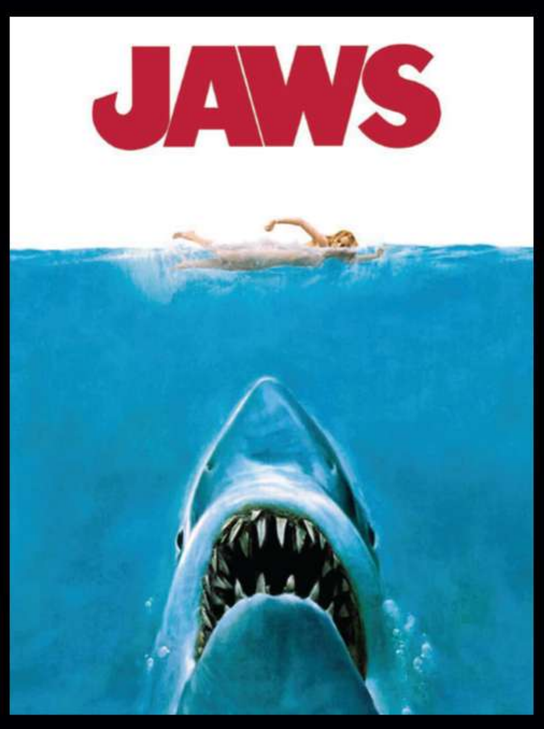
ALCHEMISTS: JOHN CARPENTER AND DEBRA HILL SYNTHESIZED MANY ELEMENTS INTO THE MAGIC THAT IS *HALLOWEEN*.

Here's where *Halloween* could have picked up some of what made it what it is:



***Blood and Lace*, 1971** — John Carpenter cites *Touch of Evil* (1958) as the big influence for *Halloween*'s POV ("slashercam") opening. But look at *Blood and Lace*? It's got that same kitchen/drawer/weapon/*bedroom*-progression, and all just as the killer's seeing it. Yes, four years earlier *Black Christmas* would lock us into Billy's eyes in much the same way, and *Dark Passage* (1947) had already done this, as well. But, for my box office money, *Blood and Lace* is the least comfortable/most shocking of these three — which is exactly what we get in *Halloween* when the mask we've been watching this violence through is peeled off, and we realize it's... a *kid* doing this killing?

***Black Christmas*, 1974** — which Carpenter was enamored with enough to propose a sequel to. And *Halloween* does port a vital element across from Bob Clark and Roy Moore's proto-slasher: the seasonal association. Holidays are wonderful mechanisms for isolation, for the rules feeling off, for people getting together to be easy pickings, and they also provide a visual theme to spook up: Santas, pumpkins, valentine cards, leprechauns. The holiday — emphasis on the singular — also provides *Halloween* with the limited time frame that the slasher operates best within: a few hours? a single night? Any longer and the world's going to notice all these missing people, all these bodies piling up, all this screaming.



***Jaws*, 1975** — a monster movie, yeah. What does Michael Myers have to do with that, though? He's not Godzilla, he's not King Kong. It's not the monstrousness *Halloween* is borrowing across, though. It's that signature *theme*, that simple yet elegant up/down heartbeat of doom pulsing through the waters, suggesting the shark even when Bruce is nowhere to be seen. This is exactly how John Carpenter uses that uncomfortable, wrong-footed 5/4 *Halloween* theme. And it's exactly what every slasher since wishes it had.

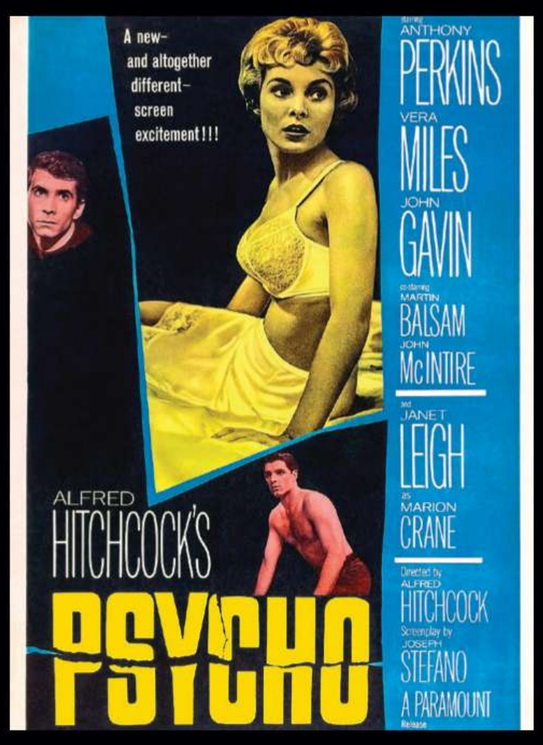
***Eyes Without a Face*, 1960**. Instead of growing up into an Emmett Kelly mask, which would be perfectly in keeping with the mask kid-Michael wore to kill his sister, he graduates to that blank white Kirk-visage we still can't look away from. And, while Michael's far from the first killer to hide his identity like that — from *Phantom of the Opera* (1925) to *Psycho* (1960), dressing up in your killer costume is a big part of these rituals of empowerment — what *Eyes Without a Face* gifted ahead was that panic-inducing blankness. Which, yes, *Alice Sweet Alice* had just done in 1976. But there's something about the *white*ness that's just especially scary in America...

Who will survive and what will be left of them?
America's most bizarre and brutal crimes!...
"THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE"
What happened is true. Now the motion picture that's just as real.

***The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, 1974**. Not to take anything away from Jess Bradford, the sorority sister of *Black Christmas* who uses her wit and her vigilance to survive the night, but Sally Hardesty actually *confronts* her attacker, who far outmatches her both in physicality and brutality. She isn't quite the antidote to this cycle of violence that Laurie will be for Michael, but she does battle Leatherface to a standstill, and escape with her life. That's final girl stuff, right there.

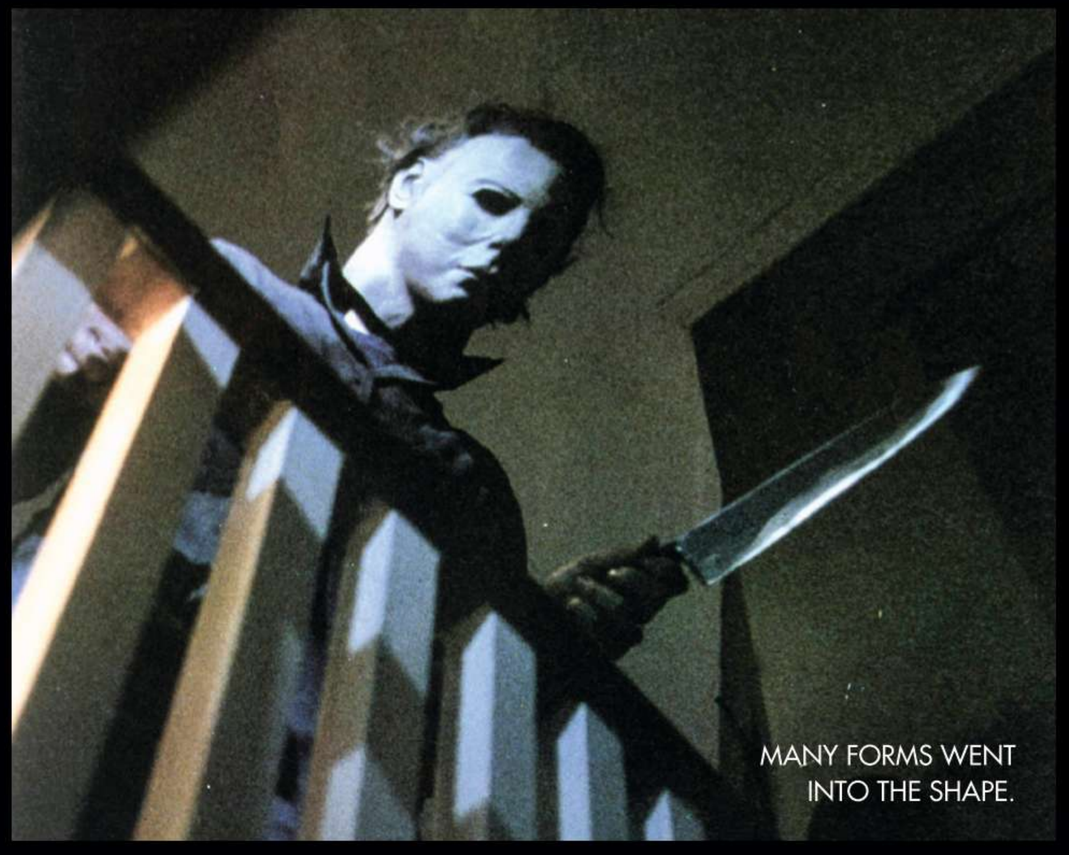
The most bizarre murder weapon ever used!
The killer's weapon a 40 ton truck! The victim's only defence a startling trap!
"DUEL"
A
Starring DENNIS WEAVER Screenplay by RICHARD MATHESON · Based on his published story
Directed by STEVEN SPIELBERG · Produced by GEORGE ECKSTEIN

***Duel*, 1971**. It's not supernatural, it's sort of a monster movie, it's making some statements about class, but more important than any of that, what it had that *Halloween* would use so effectively was a relentless killer with no stated motivation, or reason, or explanation. The driver of the car menaced by this huge rusty Peterbilt, he never knows what he's done to incur this wrath — it's a disproportionate response. All he can do is run run run, and try to survive this terrifying ordeal. The only lesson we learn from this is to never stop moving, to always be watching. The message under that, though? That this could be any of us. And that you might never know why.



***Psycho*, 1960**, which, like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, isn't quite a slasher. Norman Bates is more a stationary serial killer with some flair, yes? But what *Psycho* gave to *Halloween* — and to a lot of horror along the way, including the giallo and grindhouse fare — is that chef's knife: every slasher needs a signature weapon, yes? Be it sharp fingers, a machete, a chainsaw, or... that same knife that's always been there on the counter. Not only did *Psycho* make the shower forever terrifying, it also pulled *another* domestic tool up from that drawer in the kitchen, and showed us that it's all in the wielding. And Michael does know how to wield it.

And, yes, supposedly Michael's real and actual genesis is John Carpenter pitching Hooper a *Texas Chain Saw* spinoff — Michael's the quiet, unstoppable cousin — but don't forget that, had certain producers had their way, Michael might have cameo'd in *Silent Rage* (1982) as a previous product of this lab that produces people with physical enhancements, no conscience, and an impulse to kill. As he is, though, and will be forevermore — slashers never *really* die — his face is just as empty as that patch of grass it seemed certain he'd died on, his chest hot with Loomis' bullets. But bullets don't matter to his kind. He's already stalking off into the rest of suburbia, into *all* our backyards, to stand by our laundry lines and look up to our bedroom windows and wait, his heart beating in steady, if irregular, time. 💀



MANY FORMS WENT INTO THE SHAPE.

MEXICO MALEFICARUM *at the* ACADEMY MUSEUM

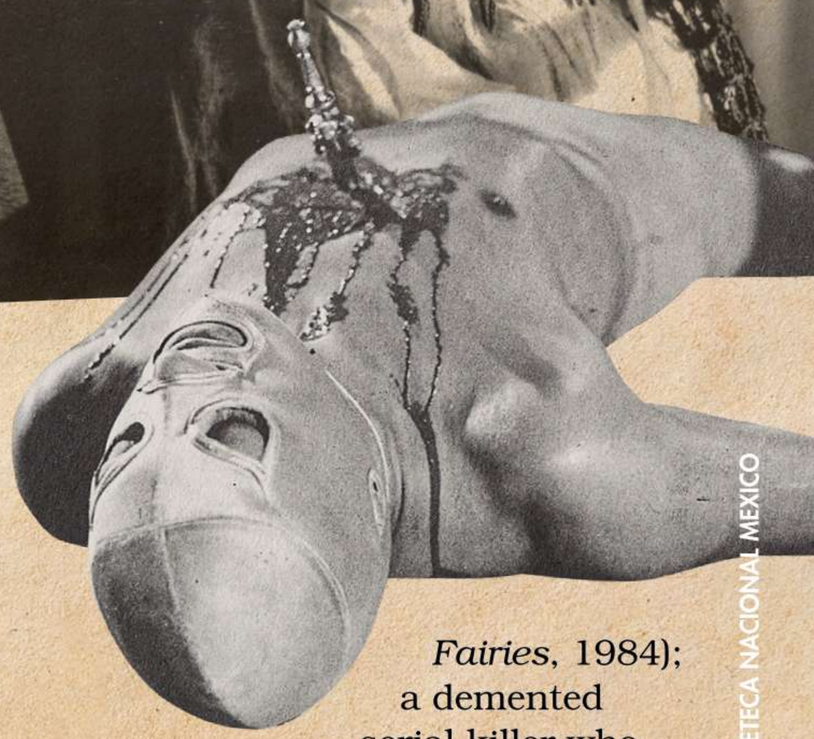
RESURRECTING 20TH CENTURY MEXICAN HORROR CINEMA ON THE BIG SCREEN.

BY ABRAHAM CASTILLO FLORES

(LEFT) *THE BLOODY VAMPIRE* - IMAGE COURTESY OF CINETECA NACIONAL MEXICO
(RIGHT) *THE WITCH* - IMAGE COURTESY OF IMCINE ARCHIVE

The life cycle of a film can be cruel. After an intense period of exposure through the many windows of exhibition — film festivals, theatrical, streaming, Blu-ray, repertory screenings and television — a film eventually arrives to a point of stasis. The Mexican fantasy and horror cinema ecosystem is riddled with such cases of hibernation. While some films endure, others remain inaccessible, chained, forgotten or lost. Those who have survived have done so thanks to the invaluable efforts of a small devoted circle of fans, film festivals, critics, historians, boutique home video labels, cultural institutions and media companies both from Mexico and abroad. Yet it has been years, sometimes decades, since some of these gems have been experienced by an audience in a movie theater. This October a resurrection will take place at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, California. I am honored to have been invited to curate *Mexico Maleficarum*, a 20-film series that celebrates the psychotronic and delirious spirit of Mexican horror cinema of the latter part of the 20th century.

Maleficarum is the Latin word for "witchcraft," which tragically became entangled with religious prosecution and abuse. We reclaim the term from the fanatics to summon its might in order to pay tribute to the actors and filmmakers, including Chano Urueta, Rosita Arenas, Abel Salazar and Isela Vega, who dreamed big, overcame straightjacket budgets, and created the ghosts, vampires, monsters and witches that populate these nightmares. Once again audiences will be able to come face to face with: a woman with severe facial deformities who becomes a vehicle for revenge (*The Witch*, 1954); a Mexican vampire who stands as the cinematic bridge between the Hammer and the Universal cinematic interpretations (*The Vampire*, 1957); an honorable ghost who will do everything possible to keep his word and deliver the secrets of the nether-world (*Black Pit of Dr M*, 1958); a powerful witch who moonlights as a housekeeper (*A Witch's Mirror*, 1960); a gang of angry extraterrestrial male specimens hungry for revenge (*The Ship of Monsters*, 1960); a powerful voodoo warlock and his band of harrowing doll men assassins (*The Curse of the Doll People*, 1961); the mummified remains of La Llorona as she struggles to come back to life (*The Curse of the Crying Woman*, 1961); a hairy humanoid brain-eating being with giant crab-like claws (*The Brainiac*, 1961); the furriest vampire bat with the widest wingspan in horror film history (*The Invasion of the Vampires*, 1962); a decapitated Aztec head which delivers the Aztec mummy mythos on steroids (*The Living Head*, 1963); a taste of uncut Mexican nunsploitation of the highest order (*Alucarda: Daughter of Darkness*, 1977); the thorny ways of young love which lead to the use of black magic (*The Lovers of the Lord of the Night*, 1983); child practitioners of the dark arts (*Poison for the Fairies*, 1984); a demented serial killer who wears colorful sequined cowboy outfits (*Santa Sangre*, 1989); and an ancient device that opens the doors to immortality via an incontrollable bloodlust (*Cronos*, 1993).



(RIGHT) *THE WORLD OF THE DEAD* - IMAGE COURTESY OF CINETECA NACIONAL MEXICO

Come and meet them all in this cinematic ritual ceremony, where they will awake from the unlit corners of archives and vaults to once again deliver their Mexquiste tales to new and curious audiences as a new chapter of their life cycle begins. 💀

Mexico Maleficarum: Resurrecting 20th Century Mexican Horror Cinema *will screen at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles from Oct 6th - 27th. Details and ticketing can be found at academymuseum.org.*

(RIGHT) *THE SHIP OF MONSTERS* - IMAGE COURTESY OF COLECCIÓN Y ARCHIVO DE FUNDACIÓN TELEVISA

BIG CLOWN SHOES TO FILL

FILMMAKER DAMIEN LEONE AND ACTOR DAVID HOWARD THORNTON AIM TO PLEASE THEIR FANS IN *TERRIFIER 2.*

BY STEVE BARTON

After a 14-year journey involving two short films, an appearance in an anthology (*All Hallows' Eve*), and headlining his own feature (*Terrifier*), Art the Clown makes his long-awaited return to screens in *Terrifier 2*, an epic (137 minutes!) sequel that hits theaters and Screambox October 7th.

FANGORIA tapped horror mainstay and *Terrifier 2* producer Steve Barton to speak to Art's creator, Damien Leone, and his vessel, actor David Howard Thornton, about the character's appeal, his grass-roots popularity and his persistent longevity.

STEVE BARTON: *Terrifier* drops in 2016, and what happens next? When did you first know Art the Clown was becoming a phenomenon?

David Howard Thornton: It was when we were at our very first convention. A cosplayer came up to us in full Art attire and I said, 'Wow, this must be a thing right now.' And then another guy got a tattoo of Art at that same convention! That's when both of us thought, 'Holy shit, this might be real.'

Damien Leone: Tattoos are significant; that's a big commitment. We used to spot a tattoo maybe once a month, and now you see one almost every other day. Seeing people who have that extreme dedication lets you know you're onto something.

Did that fan devotion make you feel you had a lot to live up to with this film?

Damien: We knew we had some big shoes to fill. *Terrifier* was primarily a showcase for Art as a villain. It was me showing what he's made of. I wanted this one to have a stronger screenplay with stronger characters. But yeah, 'does it live up to the hacksaw scene?' is the question. I think we did, but only the fans will be able to decide.

David, how do you bring a silent character to life and give him so much personality?

David: I always cultivated my characters by discovering the voice first and everything would fall into place afterwards. I couldn't do that with Art. Luckily, I have an extensive background in physical comedy and a huge appreciation for silent comedy. I also have an aunt who is Deaf and, though I never really learned a lot of sign language, I was always able to communicate with her by exaggerated movements and facial expressions. So that's been part of me my whole entire life.

Plus when I'm doing Art, even though I don't actually have lines, I'm still verbalizing lines in my head. That gives me something to go off of, because there is a musicality and a lot of timing involved.

What's the actor/director dynamic like on set?

Damien: Dave is a natural clown. He is a living, breathing cartoon character. And that's an element that wasn't there with the original Art the Clown. With Dave, I could bring more of that comedy element. It gives me a lot more options.

David: He's very open to ideas and improvisation, but he also knows what he wants. He's great at finding that balance.

Damien: I'll have a specific idea and we'll do that for a couple of takes, and then I'll say, 'now do your version.' Sometimes it's too much and sometimes it's great; I don't know until I get into the editing room. But to have those amazing options - can't ask for anything better than that.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLOODY DISGUSTING AND SCREAMBOX

(TOP) ART THE CLOWN IS BRAINIER THAN MOST SLASHERS.

(MIDDLE) FILMMAKER DAMIEN LEONE IS HANDS ON.

(BOTTOM) LEONE PUTS ART THROUGH THE WORST CAR WASH IN CINEMA.

"EVERY KILL IN THIS MOVIE IS LIKE A SET PIECE. THEY GO ON FOR MINUTES AT A TIME AND THEY'RE GLORIOUS HORROR MOVIE MOMENTS."

The *Terrifier* movies have become known for pushing the boundaries of both gore and sometimes taste. Is there a "too far" for you?

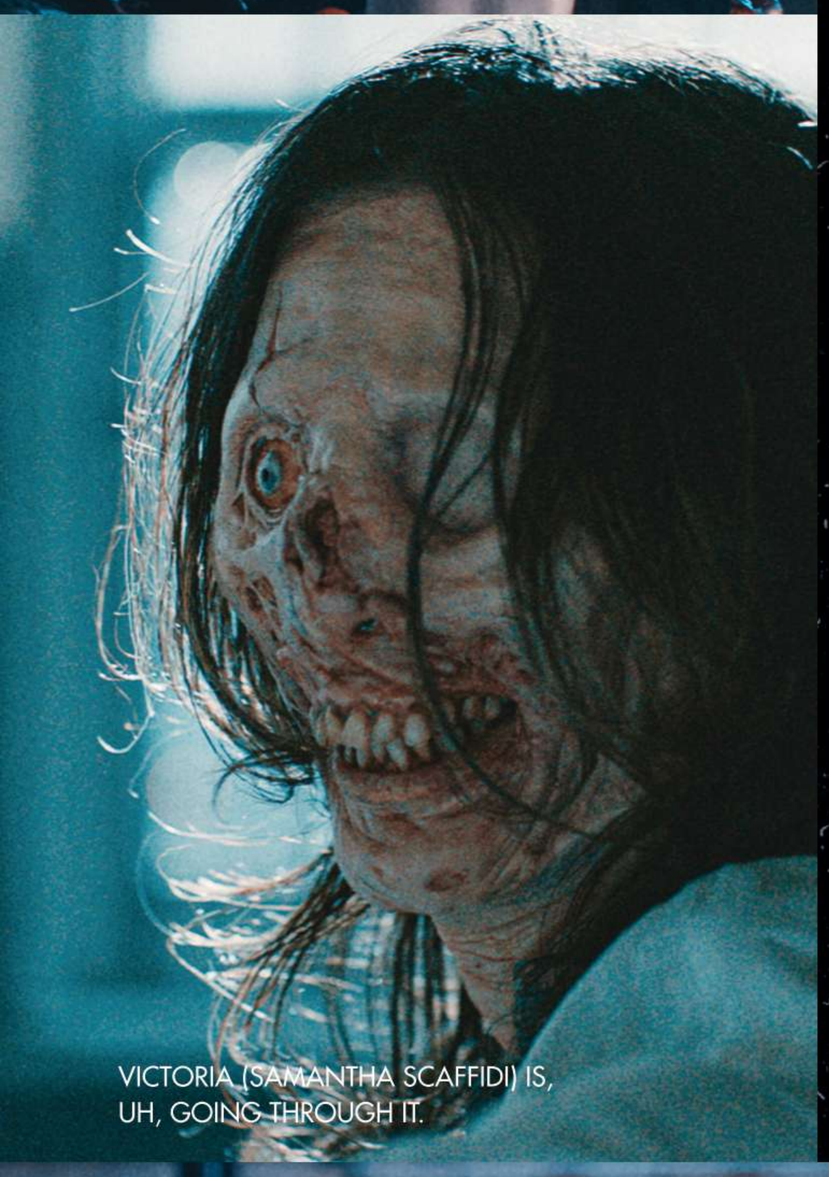
Damien: There are certainly lines. Two scenes in particular, I was going to go in one direction and I said, 'That's way too touchy right now.' So I'm conscious of that as we're filming, but at the end of the day, it's instinctual and you have to speak to the fans. You know what they're hoping for. You don't know if you're crossing that line or not until you try it.

***Terrifier 2* is over two hours long. Did you set out to make a long movie, or did it just happen to be that this is the amount of time it took to tell?**

Damien: I cut out a lot to get it to the 137-minute mark. But you can't just condense your movie into a box just for the sake of time. You're doing a disservice to the story. I don't think the movie has lots of filler, if any. I tried to make sure every scene in the film was moving the story forward.

Plus, people had to wait almost three years for us to finish this movie. So to get as much as you can now to fill that time until the next one is probably a good thing!

ART CAUSES A COSTUME SHOP OWNER (JOHNATH DAVIS) TO LOSE HIS HEAD.



VICTORIA (SAMANTHA SCAFFIDI) IS, UH, GOING THROUGH IT.

Was the extended shooting schedule a result of COVID?

Damien: COVID was an issue, but not the biggest issue. It was the scope of the production. Usually on a slasher movie, you'll have 13, 15 kills, but some kills will happen off-camera, or you'll just see a knife go up in the air and come down. Every kill in this movie is like a set piece. They go on for minutes at a time and they're glorious horror movie moments. You can't do that in a day.

I do the special effects myself with Phil (Falcone, executive producer and Damien's filmmaking partner). This film was so big that for the first time, I went to hire additional makeup artists to take some of the workload. A month before we started shooting, this crew bailed before building anything. I said, 'What do we do now? Do we just postpone this whole thing?' And Phil's like, 'No, we just have to keep moving.' We jumped into production, not having a lot of the effects built. We'd film up to a point; take a break for a week. In that week, I'd have to build the effects and then we'd go back and shoot them.

Talk to us about the importance of practical FX, as both a filmmaker and a special effects artist.

Damien: Practical gore is still superior to visual effects. Digital VFX still can't quite capture the realism of blood and liquids. And since I'm a makeup effects artist and we don't have money to hire a huge crew, I could do a lot of this stuff for nothing.

The downside is the amount of time it takes; I'm virtually doing it all by myself. But at the end of the day, it's worth it.

The success of the original *Terrifier* was very organic. The fans really drove the popularity of this movie. How does that motivate you to keep pushing the envelope?

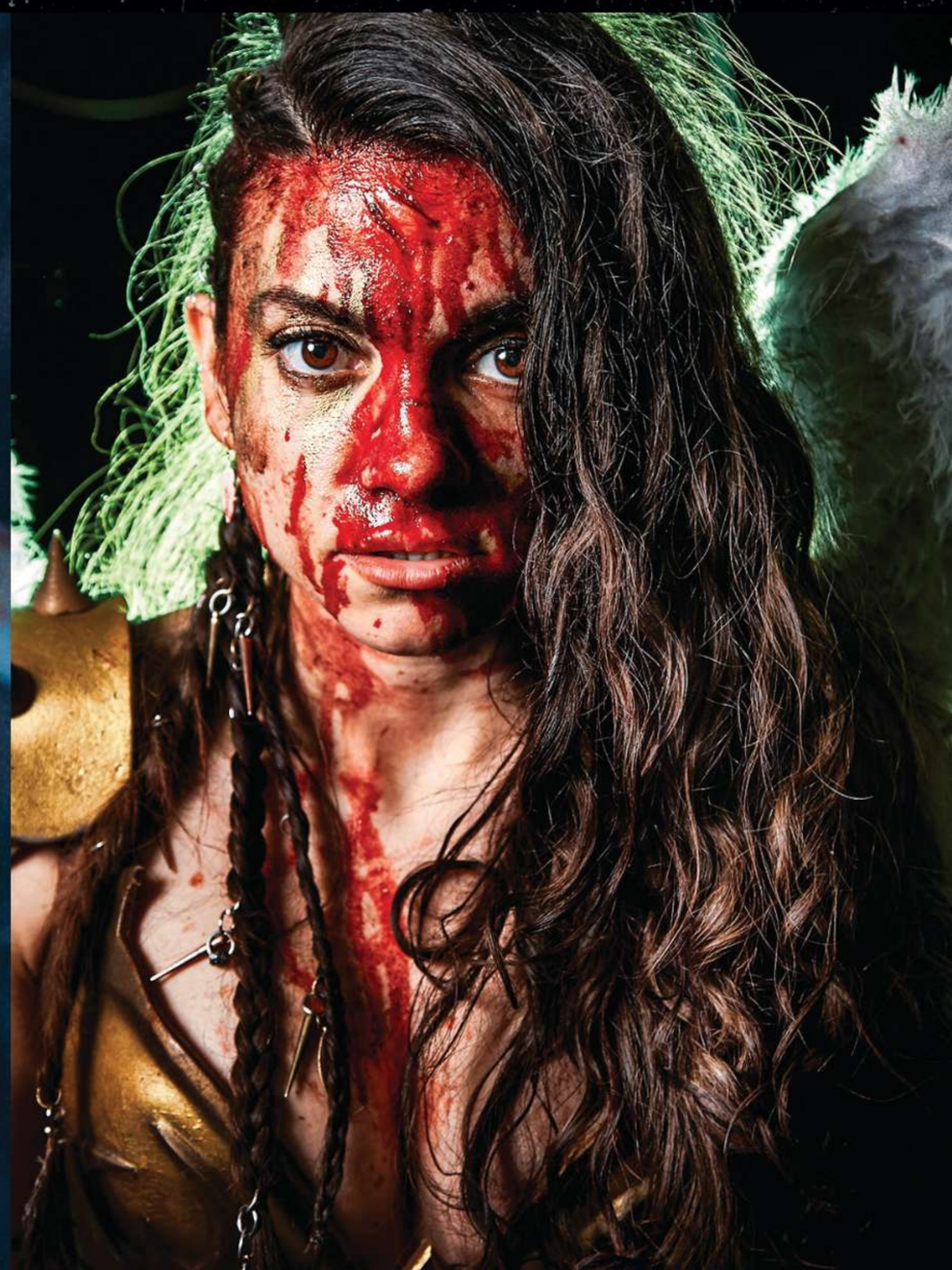
Damien: The fans are one of the reasons why we put so much time and energy into this one, and making sure it delivers the goods. Studios have so much money to pump out for marketing. We were just all word of mouth by fans. How can we let these people down?

David: We care about the genre as much as the fans do. And we want to give them what they deserve, because there's a lot of heart missing in mainstream films. Making money's great, but we're also making, no pun intended, art, and that art is driven by passion. We're very passionate about what we're doing, and we're having a blast doing it. 💀

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLOODY DISGUSTING AND SCREAMBOX

LAUREN LAVERA AS SIENNA: YOUR NEW FAVORITE SCREAM QUEEN.



BY HEATHER WIXSON

SMILE FOR THE CAMERA

The star and director of this fall's creepiest new thriller discuss the heavy themes behind their happy-face horror.

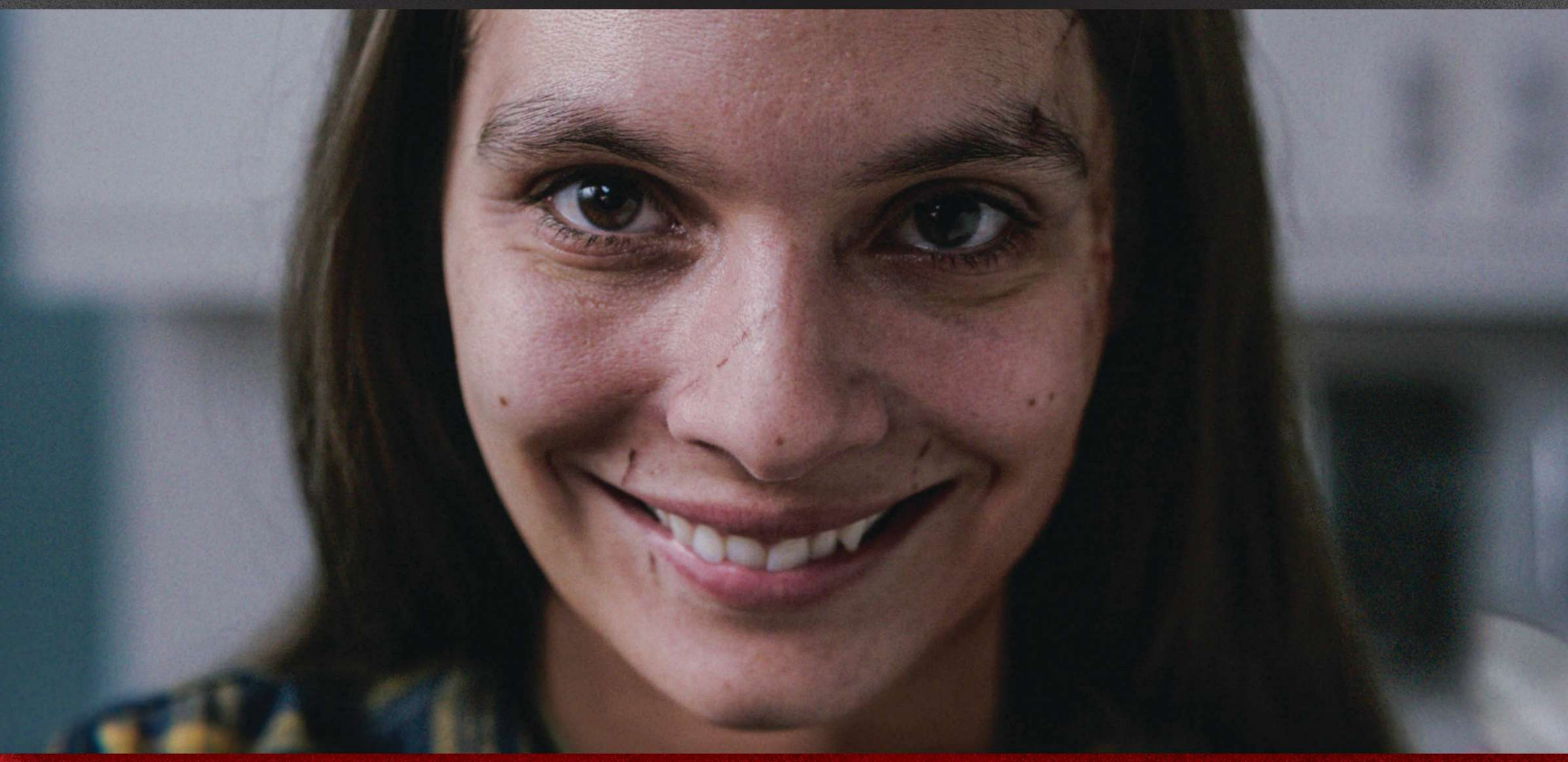


PHOTO COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

In Parker Finn's *Smile*, Sosie Bacon plays Dr. Rose Cotter, a psychologist whose patient commits suicide in front of Rose while maintaing a chilling, unnatural smile. Afterward, Rose can't shake the feeling that whatever force compelled the young woman to kill herself has now been unleashed, and will stop at nothing until it claims her.

Smile began for writer/director Finn after his short film, *Laura Hasn't Slept*, took the South by Southwest Film Festival by storm in 2020, garnering praise from critics and audiences. It also captured the attention of Paramount Pictures, who sought him out to expand on what he created in his short.

"*Smile* and *Laura Hasn't Slept* share a lot of DNA, but they're more spiritual siblings than a direct adaptation. Rather than trying to stretch the short out over 90 to 100 minutes, I started with a character journey that I wanted to tell over the course of a feature, and brought in all of the elements of *Laura Hasn't Slept* that connected the two."

Blending together elements of mental health, childhood tragedy, and a metaphysical monster, *Smile* not only delivers a chilling experience for audiences, but also thoughtfully examines the insidious nature of trauma. "*Smile* is about my desire to explore what we carry around inside of our heads. I was interested in what it might feel like to experience your mind turning against you. And when that's tied with the universal fear of not being believed, those two things together are utterly terrifying."

In order for *Smile* to work, Finn needed to find the perfect performer to bring his main character to life. "I knew the entire film was going to hinge on the Rose performance. When I met with Sosie, the way that she spoke about

the story, and character, I realized we were on the same page. She was really excited about diving headfirst into a role that truly scared her."

Finn says she nailed it. "There were so many times on set where I was behind the monitor, just watching in absolute awe as she was pulling off this magic trick. The level of raw emotion she'd bring would just make you forget that you're on set," he adds.

Sosie Bacon has worked steadily in a variety of film and television projects, but *Smile* was the actress' first opportunity to not only appear in a horror movie, but to topline one.

"I've always wanted to do a horror movie, and I always knew that I would, just because it's in my blood," Bacon says (the actress is the daughter of genre favorite Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick). "When I read it, there was this moment where I realized that I had never gotten to play such a fully-realized character as I would get to for *Smile*, so it felt like this huge moment for me.

"Rose starts out so together and totally loses it by the end, which I loved. She was complicated and messy at times," Bacon enthuses. "I was also fascinated by this process of childhood trauma manifesting itself when you're an adult. Even if you're handling everything right in your life, that trauma is under the surface."

Smile had Bacon pushing herself in new ways - creatively, physically, and emotionally. "Parker and I talked about

Rose a lot throughout production, which was really helpful. I also have my own process of building a character that I think really allowed me to explore this one in ways that maybe he wasn't expecting. It was an enormous amount of work because I was in every single frame, which is something I'd never experienced before.

"I don't think anyone can ever prepare you for the challenge of just how exhausting and physically taxing that process can be," Bacon marvels. "I don't want to sound like some spoiled brat, but making *Smile* was hard. I would definitely tell anyone leading a horror movie to get their body and their mind in shape."

Another key player in *Smile* is Kyle Gallner, who's made appearances in *Scream* (2022), *The Haunting in Connecticut*, *Red State*, and *Jennifer's Body*. "I've been a big fan of Kyle's work

"This movie will make people never be able to look at a smile the same way again."

- Parker Finn

PHOTO BY BARBARA NITKE

PARKER FINN AND SOSIE BACON (SEEN HERE AND ABOVE) NAVIGATE THE EMOTIONAL TERRAIN OF *SMILE*.

A VIRAL SMILE IS AT THE HEART OF FINN'S TALE.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

for a long time," says Finn. "He's just so magnetic, so you always want to root for him as a viewer. His character Joel is a wounded individual who uses his charm and sense of humor as a defense mechanism. That was so important to the character, and what Kyle brought to that really elevated Joel to another level."

Bacon expands on Gallner's contribution: "The tone of this movie is so dark, but the relationship between our characters, where we're exes who are trying to solve a crime, is actually quite hilarious. Kyle killed it in this. I wish that he would have been in every scene with me."

There are parallels between Finn's script and the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent pandemic. To the director, real life infiltrating the story of *Smile* was expected but not intentional.

According to Finn, "Inevitably, things I was feeling at that time were going to sneak their way into the story. We were all collectively dealing with all of these fears, of feeling isolated, this fear that we had of 'the other,' due to how COVID was being spread. And for a lot of us, those experiences were all about confronting the unknown. *Smile* is really about the fear of the unknown."

Bacon concurs, saying, "The themes in *Smile* felt like a heavy cherry on top of a heavy sundae that'd been building for two years. This movie came to me at such an interesting time, because you can't really put trauma in a box and then be like, 'See you later - bye.' Even if you work on it and work through it, what you're essentially doing is just learning how to tolerate it and keep moving forward. It's very rare that we can step back, take a breath and go, 'You know what? We are traumatized.' We were surviving and now it's normal for the pain to set in."

Beyond exploring trauma, Finn also set out to achieve an impossibility with his first feature: taking the iconography of a smile and turning that concept squarely on its head in ways that he hopes stick with viewers.

"We use smiles to convey joy, happiness, warmth," Finn explains. "We also use smiles as a mask. That could be anything from masking an uncomfortable social situation to masking trauma that we might be carrying around inside of us. A smile is a mask we put on for the world, and that was very important thematically to Rose's character.

"To take something that is meant to impart joy, warmth, and happiness and really turn it upside down in *Smile* was a really delicious idea to me," Finn says. "And we pushed things pretty far with the imagery in a number of twisted ways so that, hopefully, this movie will make people never be able to look at a smile the same way again." 💀

NO ONE SHOULD LOOK THAT STOKED TO BE IN A HOSPITAL BED.

Laurie's Guys

By Jamie Lee Curtis

HALLOWEEN ENDS'

veteran star unpacks a 44-year journey with Nick Castle and James Jude Courtney, the first and last men to menace her as The Shape.

On the eve of the release of David Gordon Green's *Halloween Ends*, FANGORIA invited genre icon Jamie Lee Curtis – Laurie Strode herself – to chat with filmmaker Nick Castle, who played The Shape in John Carpenter's 1978 classic (and who has since returned in the last three films for cameo appearances), and actor James Jude Courtney, who's donned the mask and coveralls since 2018's *Halloween*. The three discuss arriving at the end of the journey, the impact the series has had on fandom, and their unlikely but treasured friendship, forged in the midst of making nightmares.

ENDING IT ALL

James Jude Courtney: With these three films, I felt like I was working on the same movie for five years. It was as if *Halloween Ends* was the third act of a movie we were shooting in sequence. Jamie, how do you feel?

Jamie Lee Curtis: Here's what I would say about *Halloween Ends*: contact was made. These three movies are some intense, at times ultra-violent foreplay. Contact must be made between Laurie Strode and Michael Myers. The intention of all of these movies is that these two forces are being drawn together. And contact is made in this final movie.

James: The experience you and I had in the finale, I don't feel comfortable talking about that until maybe months away from the film. But there's one particular scene, which is that contact that Jamie just talked about. It was the most special, powerful, most beautiful experience that I've ever had in a film with another actor.

Jamie: The tenet of 'Thou shalt not kill' is explored in a powerful way in this new movie and… what does that tenet really mean to both people? And it's a very interesting dance that is done between them. And it is a very satisfying dance. It's a tragic dance. It will infuriate some people; it will delight some people. There have been 44 years of preamble to this moment.

"The fact that the three of us are conduits for a cathartic reaction in a safe space is a privilege."
- Jamie Lee Curtis

James: Now that we're wrapping all this up, I've been sort of pondering this. I'm realizing what I've been carrying for four years in my soul. And I've been thinking about you guys and going, 'Oh my God, you guys have carried this for forty-some-odd years.'

Jamie: 44.

James: Yeah, and I am only becoming aware of that now, because in my heart and my mind, I'm putting this to rest.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES - PHOTOS BY RYAN GREEN

JAMIE LEE CURTIS IS BACK AS LAURIE STRODE (ABOVE), AND BACK WITH OLD FRIEND NICK CASTLE.

DEJA VU

Nick Castle: What jumped out at me on the new films was the similarity on set, meaning the actors, meaning the crew, the cast. Everyone on set back in '78, we were friends, film school buddies. It was like we were doing a film school project. It had that sense of spontaneity. There wasn't a lot of anxiety on the set. It was a bunch of pals running around together. It's like having recess.

Jamie: A very weird and bloody recess, but yes.

Nick: And then meeting the new gang in 2018... John came on the set the week that I was there, seeing Jamie again. That situation was just mind-boggling. It was *deja vu* times twelve. It was very strange, very fun. And then discovering that the whole gang there had their own familiarity, and it felt very much the same.

Jamie: John Carpenter and David Gordon Green are very similar people. They're both Southern boys. They're both film geeks. They both work with their friends from film school and beyond. They're incredibly loyal to the people that they work with.

"It will infuriate some people; it will delight some people. There have been 44 years of preamble to this moment."

- Jamie Lee Curtis

Nick: There was something palpably similar between the two events. Of course, the movie's about the same thing, but more than that, it's about the camaraderie that is bred by good leadership – John being one [good leader], and David being another. And that's an important element to make anything at least fun to do, if not a success.

James: I had that same sense when I walked in, that I looked around at the cast and the crew, the moment I met you, Jamie, the moment I met you, Nick. I had this feeling like we've done this before in lifetimes past. We were a community, a Shakespearean troupe. We marched in a battle. We did something together before.

A HORRIBLE FENCING ACCIDENT. (SORRY)

WORKING NIGHTS: DIRECTOR DAVID GORDON GREEN AND HIS SHAPE, JAMES JUDE COURTNEY.

THE SHAPE GETS HIS JOHN WOO MOMENT?

WE HAD TO USE THIS DOUBLE IMAGE FOR A PIECE ABOUT NICK CASTLE AND JAMES JUDE COURTNEY...

SHAPING THE SHAPE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES - PHOTOS BY RYAN GREEN

Jamie: James, I remember you and I had a conversation out at Laurie's compound one long night back in the day when we first really met and talked. And what I was so impressed with was the sort of maturity and respect you had for The Shape as you were taking him on from Nick. And I'm not going to call you immature, Nick, but –

Nick: Well, I am little.

Jamie: You are, a little. And what I think is important is the gravitas that, forty years later, Michael had taken on as a character through all the movies, all the iterations. There was a gravitas that was required. And that's where James stepped in. James, how would you describe how you approached it?

James: The wonderful old character actor Ted Knight gave me this incredible gift. He told me [that] in order to be a good actor, emulate the bartender, emulate the guy walking down the street, emulate your mother, but don't watch the way they move their hands or their feet. Don't try to imitate their voice. Reach into their soul. And once you grab their soul, you will automatically move your hands the way they do; you will automatically modulate your voice the way they do. And so I practice that. That's part of my technique as an actor.

And so I watched the '78 film and there's one scene where Nick is walking as The Shape, camera left to camera right, in the backyard. And in my head, I just went, 'I got it.' And I never again thought about how I was going to move or what I was going to do.

Jamie: I have goosebumps in all the places that you get them and a couple that you don't. What you're describing, James, is both why you are so good at what you do and why the movies are working the way they are, because that translates for some reason onto the screen. I don't know why, but it does.

James: When I found, in that moment, the essence that Nick had created, and I embodied that, I then allowed for the shifts and changes that had happened in the character over the course of the films and the years, because it's in my memory banks. It's in my DNA now.

And Nick will always say, 'Yeah, yeah. I just put the mask on and I just walked.' Bullshit.

Jamie: No, he didn't. I call bullshit on that, too.

James: Right. So I was able to embrace that, draw it into my soul and then allow it to fester and multiply and grow and anger. And all the things that needed to grow over forty years grew inside me.

Jamie: And what's interesting is the maturity of your Shape, James, versus Nick's immature Shape. Your belief, Nick, that 'Well, I just put on the mask and did my thing,' is not self-deprecating because you're not denying that it was good. It was just that you weren't necessarily *intellectually* into it, and there was an immaturity, if you will. You're all in your body, like a teenager. You're not thinking. And then forty years go by, and James shows up with his take. And all of that soul-searching is not lost in the work.

FAN SERVICE

Jamie: I scare easily. I'm not into horror. And yet there is something cathartic that happens. And it is a safe space to confront the very worst that you can imagine, things we can't control in the outside world, but we can if we're in a movie theater. And the fact that the three of us are conduits for that reaction in people in a safe space is a privilege.

James: It releases so much from the subconscious. I've heard from EMTs and firefighters and ER doctors who watch these films in particular, after traumatic events, so that they can release all the trauma.

Jamie: You guys meet a lot of fans and you see what you have done – as Michael, through the fear that you have engendered in people – to release for them something that they have then been able to make manifest in their own lives. I've just now started to go, 'Oh fuck, we're all just right where we're supposed to be.'

Nick: It has been a strange journey for me. It was seventeen days or so in terms of the original production. I was there for a few days. I'm mainly a director and writer; the relationship that we've gotten to create between the fans and ourselves – that's something you don't normally get to do. But to finally see the people that you're actually doing this work to entertain, to see that it actually has some effect is pretty special. It's part of their lives.

...BUT SURPRISE! IT'S PRODUCER/FANGO FAM MEMBER RYAN TUREK. YOU MADE IT, KID.

HORROR'S ODD THROUPLE

Jamie: Here's what I know is the miracle, you guys: for some reason, John [Carpenter] and Debra [Hill] recognized in me something I did not recognize. I'm going to be 64 this year; it's taken me this long to understand, really, why I'm Laurie Strode. It's that humanness, that deep vulnerability, that deep need for connection and love. Laurie's such a dreamer. She's so beautiful in her innocence, of thinking that life is going to be beautiful because she's going to meet some guy and they're going to hold each other in that beautiful teenage way.

Yet somehow all three of us have ended up in this relationship together, exactly for the right reason. And it's impossible to articulate it. And yet there's an emotionality to it, to the seriousness in the way we do this job, because we understand what it represents to legions of people who have carried Laurie as she navigates her destiny with Michael.

Nick: That's the other thing I was thinking: in some weird way, *we're your guy*. You didn't have a boyfriend in the first one; we never met your husband that fathered your daughter. We're your guy. Is there a sense of that in your world? I'm sure you and James must have gotten into that a little bit; you had so many intimate scenes in the last three films.

Jamie: Nick, you and I had our moments. I remember them, even though it was so fast, seventeen days. But James and I have had, over these five years of knowing each other, we've had a couple of really powerful moments together. And there's one in this last movie that James and I can't even speak about because the two of us start to sob.

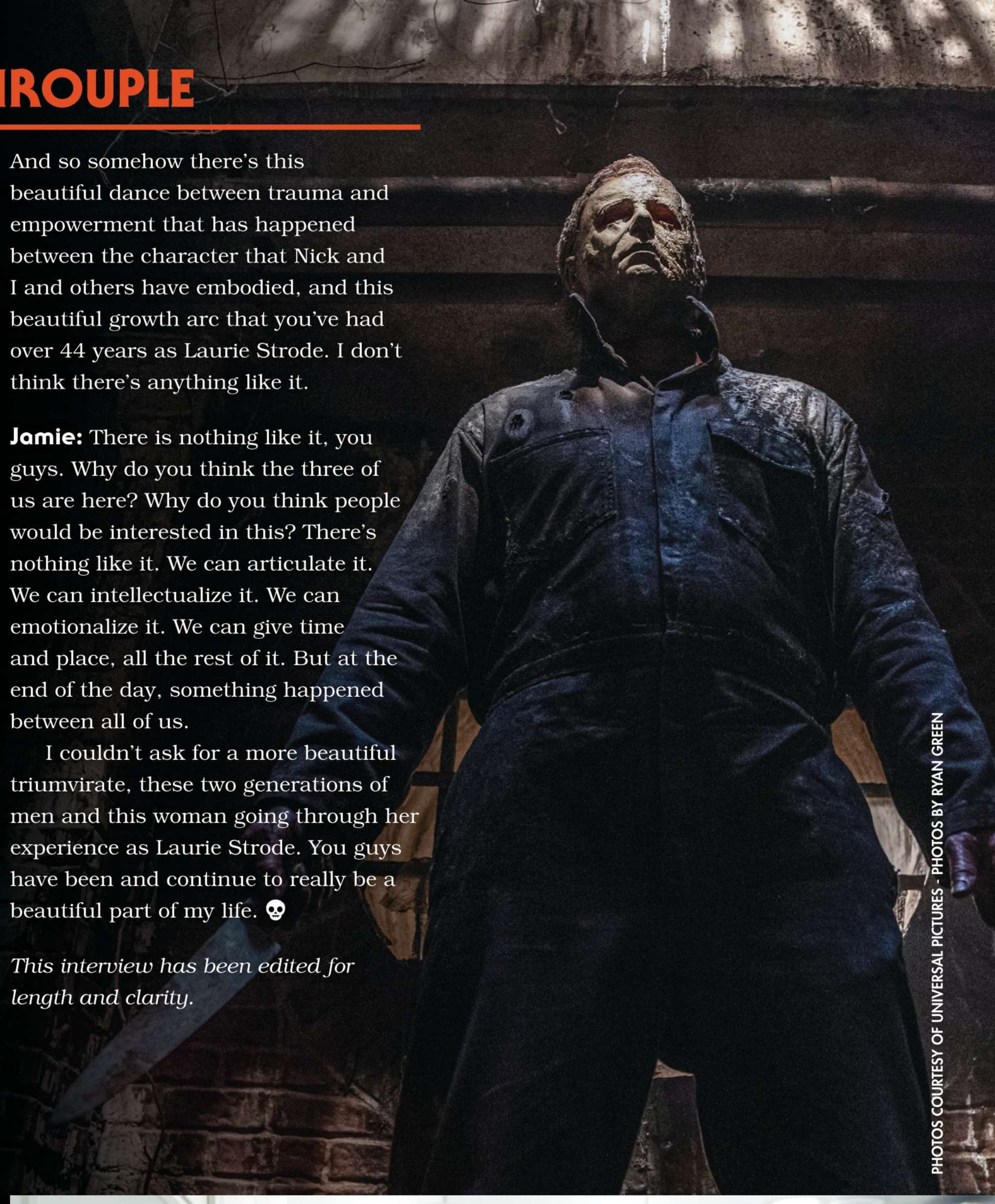
James: I think the intimacy speaks to something that, for the entirety of this series, was a story of the development of female empowerment, which I think is one of the most important issues we can deal with right now in society. Because when females become empowered, then men will truly become empowered. And then we may become an empowered species.

And so somehow there's this beautiful dance between trauma and empowerment that has happened between the character that Nick and I and others have embodied, and this beautiful growth arc that you've had over 44 years as Laurie Strode. I don't think there's anything like it.

Jamie: There is nothing like it, you guys. Why do you think the three of us are here? Why do you think people would be interested in this? There's nothing like it. We can articulate it. We can intellectualize it. We can emotionalize it. We can give time and place, all the rest of it. But at the end of the day, something happened between all of us.

I couldn't ask for a more beautiful triumvirate, these two generations of men and this woman going through her experience as Laurie Strode. You guys have been and continue to really be a beautiful part of my life. 💀

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES - PHOTOS BY RYAN GREEN

MAKEUP FX ARTIST CHRISTOPHER NELSON AND THE OG SHAPE, NICK CASTLE.

IN THE END, WE DON'T DECIDE THESE THINGS

HOW DARCY THE MAIL GIRL FORCED JOE BOB BRIGGS TO RECONSIDER *HALLOWEEN III*

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD
ILLUSTRATION BY PUIS CALZADA

At its sixth 24-Hour Horror-thon in Philadelphia in 2012, Exhumed Films, which traditionally only offers hints to the movies in each lineup, described the night's fifth film as "one of the most divisive horror films of all time. Wait for the title screen, then either sit back and enjoy, or take the opportunity to catch some dinner."

KEEPING HIS WORD: DARCY THE MAIL GIRL (AKA DIANA PRINCE) HOLDS JOE BOB TO HIS PROMISE TO GIVE *HALLOWEEN III* ANOTHER SHOT.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL GINGOLD

Yet, when that feature proved to be *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*, few if any in the audience got up and left, and the title was greeted with significant applause. It was a sign of the change in attitude among genre audiences toward *Halloween III*, three decades after it first turned off many Michael Myers fans by taking a distinct approach to All Hallows horrors. Many of the franchise's followers now celebrate the sequel, which marks its 40th anniversary this October, as a unique and worthy entry in the franchise, and as an effective chiller in its own right.

There is one longtime B-flick aficionado whose negative opinion remained unswayed through all those years — famed drive-in movie critic Joe Bob Briggs. Back in 1982, his first year expounding on the joys of blood and boobs as a columnist in *The Dallas Times Herald*, Joe Bob was not happy with the different direction *Halloween III* had taken.

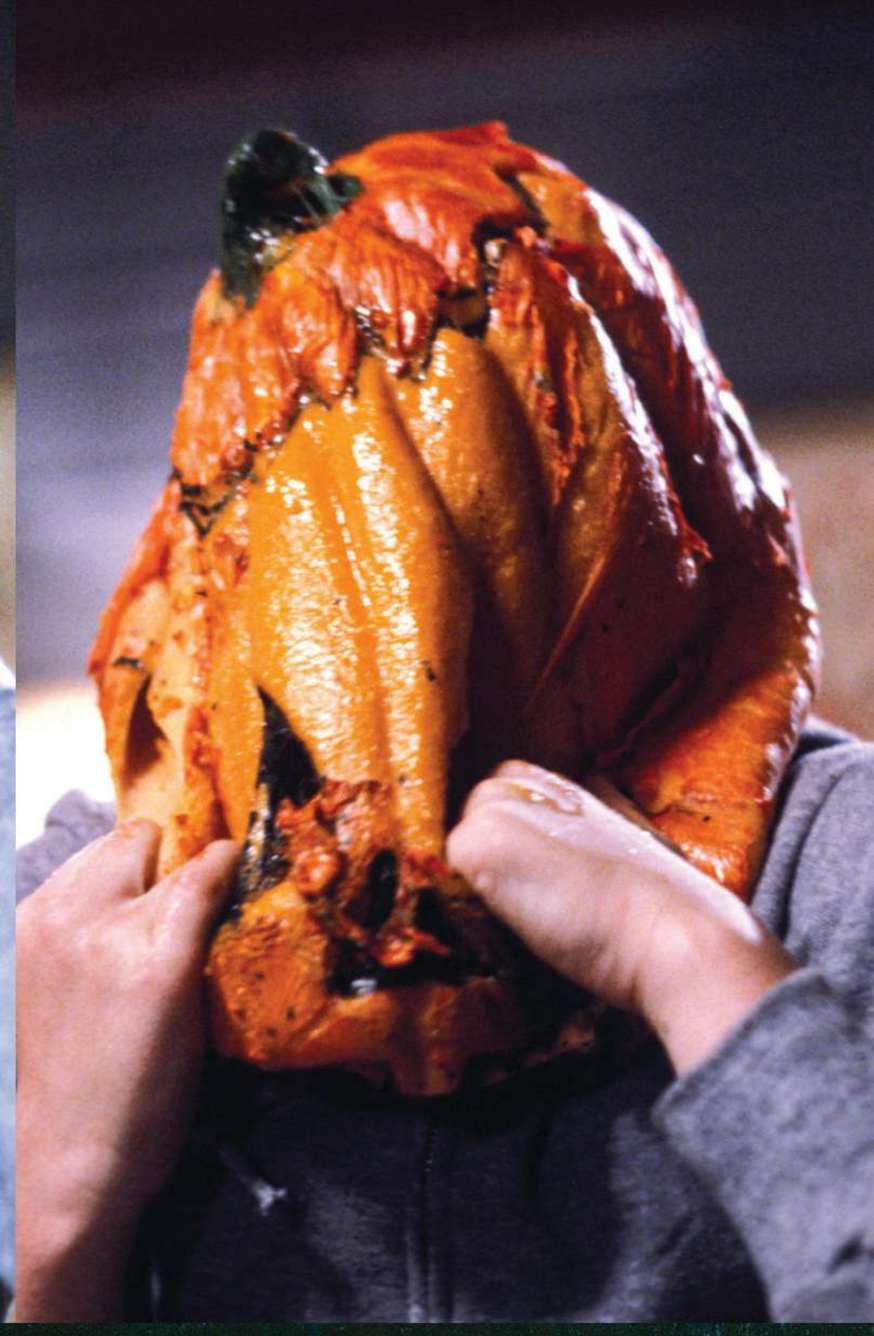
"Numero uno: Where the hell is Donald Pleasance?" he wrote. "Numero duo: Where the hell is Jamie Lee Curtis? … Numero trio: WHERE IS THE SLASHER???!!! … These *Halloween* jerk-olas have gone Hollywood. They obviously got stoked up on cocaine and forgot their roots." (Despite his negative reaction, he ultimately awarded it a grudging two stars and did tell his readers to "check it out.")

Joe Bob doubled down on his objections when he showed *Halloween III* on his TNT *MonsterVision* program; during one of his interstitials, he compared it to a *Murder, She Wrote* episode. But he received some serious pushback in his latest vehicle, Shudder's *The Last Drive-In With Joe Bob Briggs*, from his regular co-star Darcy the Mail Girl. A longtime, die-hard fan of *Halloween III*, she had no problem calling him out on his opinion of one of her favorite flicks.

"We had it available for our first marathon," Darcy reveals during an interview with the duo conducted last year. "I said, 'Oh my God, we have to show *Halloween III*, and we can get Tom Atkins. How amazing would that be?' And this man said, 'No one cares about *Halloween III*; it's so bad, no one wants to see it.' I was mind-blown that that was his reaction; 'You've got to be kidding me!' He stuck with that idea that we didn't need to show it, and it became my mission to show him that other people like *Halloween III*."

She recalls first seeing the sequel in her teens, after reading about it

THANKFULLY JOE BOB'S *HALLOWEEN III* REVISIT WASN'T THIS ROUGH.



in Leonard Maltin's *Movie and Video Guide*. "He gave it a really bad review and said it killed kids, and I thought, 'I have to find this!' So then when I first saw it, I remember thinking, 'Do they really kill kids?' Honestly, I think I first watched it edited for TV on AMC or something like that. They would show all the *Halloween*s, and it was just the weirdo one that stuck out, and it made me go track down the full, uncut version. It just stayed with me; I was very impressed with it."

Joe Bob then recalls his initial reaction. "I hated it! I thought the idea of Halloween masks that were activated by a song on TV—"

"Was brilliant!" Darcy interjects, and both laugh.

"— Was really hokey, lame screenwriting, and the whole premise of the movie was silly," Joe Bob continues. "People ask me, 'If it had just been called *Season of the Witch*, would you have liked it better?' I say, 'Probably not,' because I just didn't like the exploding masks and all that. I would have liked to see the original *Halloween* characters again, and to go back to Haddonfield, unlike you."

"But can't you admire them for trying something new?" Darcy asks, and he replies, "I mean, no one sets out to make a bad movie, and you can say anyone who makes a film is doing a bold thing. And John Carpenter wasn't even doing it himself. It was his concept, but he said, 'I'm going to executive-produce this series of different *Halloween* movies, but I'm not going to direct them.'"

"And that doesn't make it bad!"

"I'm just saying, I'm not sure the idea would have worked anyway. *Halloween III* didn't lose money, but it made so much less than *Halloween II*, and that caused the rift between Moustapha Akkad, the executive producer, and John Carpenter. That's when they decided to part ways, and starting with *Halloween 4*, there was no John Carpenter involvement, and Akkad was telling each successive director, 'There must be Michael Myers, there must be Dr. Loomis,' because he saw that as the secret to perpetuating the franchise. And he was right! I mean, you wouldn't have the 11th *Halloween* as a separate story making $200 million!"

"Maybe you would!" Darcy counters. "Maybe we'd have a bunch of awesome, different movies and you'd think, 'I can't wait for that one to come out!'"

"Well, you know, Carpenter's idea of changing it up each time was 30 years ahead of *American Horror Story*, and that's what it was," Joe Bob acknowledges. "It was the *American Horror Story* approach, and I don't know that anyone had ever tried that before, saying that the title of this is (X), but every year it's going to be a different story."

Joe Bob hadn't rewatched *Halloween III* at the time of our chat, but that recently changed. When he allowed Darcy to program the first night of Joe Bob's Drive-In Jamboree at Memphis' Malco Summer Drive-In this past July, she seized the chance to not only show *Halloween III* and prove its fan base, but reunite director Tommy Lee Wallace and stars Atkins and Stacey Nelkin for the show. The result was a string of riveting anecdotes from the trio about the making of the movie, even as Joe Bob pointed out continuity errors and other issues with it.

At the height of the event, Joe Bob asked the large audience, "Thumbs up?" which received plenty of cheers and honking horns. He then asked, "Thumbs down?" which drew a significantly softer response. He followed up by admitting, "I think I appreciate it more now," and that he admired "the brilliance of Dan O'Herlihy's performance" as the villainous Conal Cochran. He met a challenge Darcy had proposed if the movie was received positively, and put on a pumpkin mask like one of those seen in the film. He also feigned dying à la the unfortunate Little Buddy.

No doubt it was vindication for Darcy, whose admiration for *Halloween III* has only grown since she first discovered it in her youth. "I rewatch it and learn more about it, and it's been a very special film to me," she says, noting that a big part of its appeal is "that they dared to do something different. I didn't know why at the time, but now the idea that it was supposed to be part of an anthology — that would have been amazing, to have a different story every year. What could have been, you know? It's just not like anything else." 💀

That Time JOE DANTE Was Going to Direct HALLOWEEN III

By MICHAEL GINGOLD

WHAT WOULD A *HALLOWEEN III* FROM JOE DANTE HAVE LOOKED LIKE? NOT LIKE THIS, BUT WE WERE ON A DEADLINE.

(LEFT) CONAL COCHRAN GLEEFULLY SENTENCES A CHILD TO DEATH; (RIGHT) EVENTUAL *HALLOWEEN III* DIRECTOR TOMMY LEE WALLACE.

In 1981, Avco Embassy Pictures released Joe Dante's *The Howling* and John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*, and the filmmakers' crossing of paths there almost led the former to join the franchise launched by the latter. Carpenter wanted to take *Halloween III* in a new direction, and initially, Dante was in talks to direct it.

"We had a meeting about it at a restaurant at Universal that's no longer there," Dante recalls. "I got the impression that John wasn't too happy with how *Halloween II* turned out, and was sort of bridling at the idea of remaking the same movie every time they made a *Halloween* film. So he came up with the idea to do a series of horror movies with Halloween themes, and release one every October.

"I think he had the story for *Halloween III* already, or at least the idea for it. And as we talked about me coming on as director, I suggested, why don't you offer [the screenwriting assignment] to Nigel Kneale, since it's got a Stonehenge-y kind of theme? I knew John liked the same movies I did, and he was very excited by that idea."

Kneale, with his track record on the *Quatermass* trilogy and other horror/sci-fi scripts, seemed like the perfect choice for a movie that would merge witchcraft themes with the computer age. And it was he, Dante believes, who came up with the idea of casting veteran actor Dan O'Herlihy as *Halloween III*'s villainous Conal Cochran. But Dante wasn't attached to the film long enough to collaborate with Kneale.

"At the time, I was also talking to Steven Spielberg about doing *Gremlins*, which was in early pre-production with storyboards and that sort of stuff. Then the *Twilight Zone* movie that he and John Landis were doing at Warner Bros. came up, and I was offered a segment of that. Now, *Halloween III* wasn't a go project at that point, and this was, so I reluctantly had to take my leave of it. I told John Carpenter I had to go for the one that I knew was going to happen. And he went off and made *Halloween III* at Universal, and the rest is history."

A somewhat troubled history, at least when it came to the writing side, with Kneale ultimately taking his name off the movie following revisions by director Tommy Lee Wallace. Carpenter has said that the British scribe was difficult to work with, and Dante says, "I know he was very exacting, and I do remember when I tried to get him involved in a remake of *X: The Man With X-Ray Eyes* at Orion, my friend Jon Davison, who was a friend of Nigel's, was talking about my stuff with him. Jon said, 'Joe's very picky about what he does,' and Nigel said, 'Not picky enough!' [*Laughs*] Which I think sums up his whole ethos; he had very high standards that he held himself to, and he expected others to toe the line."

This wasn't the only film on which both Dante and Kneale were involved during the early '80s; they were also part of a 3D *Creature from the Black Lagoon* remake Landis was producing for Universal. "I was the backup director for that picture," Dante reveals; Jack Arnold, who had helmed the original *Creature*, was Landis' first choice for the redux. "If Jack, who was missing a leg at that time, had not been able to do it, I was hired as the guy who would be on set to take over. So I was in on a lot of the discussions, but that project was another one that didn't go anywhere. I remember doing a 3D test for *Creature*; Chris Walas [*Gremlins*] built the suit, and we shot it in Bronson Canyon or someplace like that.

"I don't think that script was one of Nigel's better works," Dante continues. "The problem was that there was another monster; Universal wasn't happy with just the Creature, and wanted a second monster for the Creature to fight. That kind of botched it up, I felt."

For the record, although Universal had both the dimensional *Creature* and *Jaws 3-D* on its slate at the time, Dante doesn't recall the possibility of *Halloween 3-D* being brought up. Nor does he know if Carpenter had any further concepts for Halloween-themed features in mind. "I didn't talk to him about a series beyond *Halloween III*, I just talked to him about that project. So I didn't have any idea about where he was going to go with it after that. But I thought it was a great idea to deviate from the formula, though as history has proven, that didn't turn out to be a particularly remunerative idea.

"I think *Halloween III* was ill-served by the studio," Dante concludes. "I don't think they knew how to sell it, though now it has become quite a cult item. But at the time, it wasn't very well-appreciated." 💀

PARTY OVER, OOPS, OUT OF TIME

V/H/S/99 TAKES THE FOUND-FOOTAGE SERIES TO THE DAWN OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM.

By Brett Gallman

IN "TO HELL AND BACK," GRANDMA GREAT (COE-JANE WEIGHT) IS READY FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM! WE DON'T *THINK* THE POOR SOUL ON THE RIGHT (JAMES CHRISTIAN MORRIS) IS HER AFTER THE Y2K BUG, BUT WHO CAN SAY?

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHUDDER

OVER THE PAST DECADE, THE *V/H/S* FRANCHISE HAS WEAPONIZED OUR COLLECTIVE NOSTALGIA FOR THE FORMAT THAT DEFINED THE FIRST ERA OF HOME VIDEO, WARPING THOSE FOND, FUZZY MEMORIES INTO STATICKY NIGHTMARES. CLEVERLY SPLICING THE ANTHOLOGY FORMAT WITH THE FOUND FOOTAGE MEDIUM, THE FRANCHISE CONJURES THE GHOSTS OF A BYGONE ERA, WHERE THE WRONG (OR RIGHT, DEPENDING ON YOUR PERSUASION) TAPE MIGHT HARBOR SOMETHING GENUINELY AWFUL. IT'S BECOME A PLAYGROUND FOR SOME OF THE GENRE'S MOST EXCITING TALENT TO BOOT, ALLOWING FILMMAKERS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE TO RECORD DEMENTED TRANSMISSIONS ONTO AN ANALOG TABLEAU.

The latest entry, *V/H/S/99*, pushes into the tape format's final frontier: the dawn of the millennium that would see it surpassed by a digital, high-definition revolution that couldn't completely eradicate it from our consciousness. Otherwise, we probably wouldn't be anticipating the fifth entry in this namesake series, which welcomes Maggie Levin, Johannes Roberts, Flying Lotus, Tyler MacIntyre, and Joseph and Vanessa Winter into its fold for another round of carnage.

Don't expect the same routine for the next installment, though, as producer Josh Goldbloom promises the *V/H/S* team isn't resting on its laurels. Instead, the crew sought to upend the formula, starting with reimagining the wraparound segment that traditionally binds an anthology together. "This time, we decided to do away with the wraparound entirely," Goldbloom reveals, citing a desire to capture the authenticity of a home recording. "With home videos, there was a base layer of tape and something was recorded over it — you would be watching a movie, and a commercial or another program would pop in," he explains further. "That was our idea for this — let's make it as authentic as possible and capture that experience."

In keeping with the spirit of the franchise's demented showmanship, Goldbloom also insists the new structure provides a nice shock to the system, saying, "We wanted to redesign it, and we did it in a wild way."

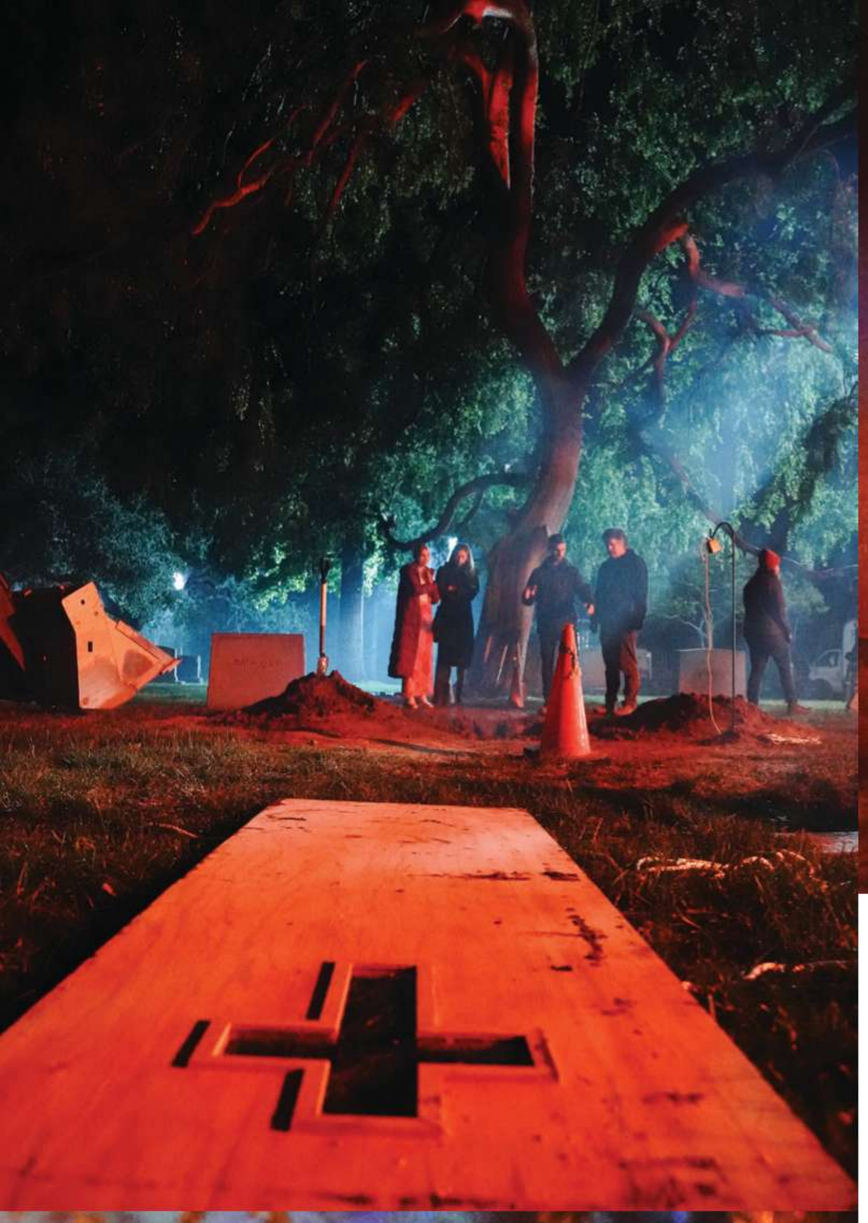
Moving ahead into 1999 was another launching point, one that felt like a no-brainer following *V/H/S/94*. "We had so much fun with 1994 that we wanted to stay in the '90s," Goldbloom says, before explaining the particular appeal of a decade that culminated with Y2K hysteria.

"1999 seemed like the absolutely perfect year for us," he continues before citing "all of the conspiracy theories and the fear of the future" as inspiration for the film, which promises to take an anarchic, apocalyptic approach. "This sequel especially is complete and utter chaos," Goldbloom shares, recapturing the theatrics of a vintage exploitation huckster inviting us to glimpse at his latest freakshow.

He also insists that there's a method to the madness, driven by one imperative: to allow each filmmaker to realize their vision. "Creatively, we never want to get in the way of the filmmakers," Goldbloom says. "We only want to support them, so we work with them a bit on the ideas. They come to us with treatments that turn into the script."

Taking this approach to *V/H/S/99* was especially important in realizing the anthology's mixtape structure, which provides its own set of unique challenges. "What makes *V/H/S* so different from other anthologies is that we crew up separately for each segment," Goldbloom explains, touting the importance of finding the right chemistry among the cast and crew so each director can achieve their goals.

According to Goldbloom, this is the most difficult task when producing a *V/H/S* film due to the amount of coordination involved. He says, "it's a lot of conversations, it's a lot of disappointment, it's a lot of scheduling." However, the approach is ultimately rewarding, because it yields the franchise's signature patchwork feel, something Goldbloom thinks they've accomplished with *V/H/S/99*.



GRAVEYARD SHENANIGANS WITH ANNIE (ISABELLE HAHN), LUCY (BRITTANY GANDY), AND HANNAH (LOGAN RILEY) IN "SUICIDE BID." THIS WAS PRETTY MUCH MY HIGH SCHOOL FANTASY.

NATE (ARCHELAUS CRISTANO) GOES TOO HARD ON NEW YEAR'S EVE. WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE.

"Each segment has a wholly unique vision," he insists. "We wanted it to feel like we're watching five very different tapes."

Turning the filmmakers loose has resulted in one of the more wild outings yet for the franchise. "We wanted to do things we had never done before," Goldbloom teases before revealing that Flying Lotus, the transgressive mind behind 2017's *Kuso*, will take the franchise to an unexpected place — the set of a game show, a space the filmmaker has long wanted to explore.

"He really wanted to work within a game show," Goldbloom reveals. "As a child, he always wanted to be on a game show," and *V/H/S/99* allowed him and the producers to push the series in a new direction. "Building and creating our own game show and authentically replicating that experience" was rewarding for Goldbloom, who teases the segment with a wickedly tantalizing question: What if someone got extremely injured on a *Double Dare* set? This obviously won't be the Nickelodeon many of us recall from childhood.

Likewise, Tyler MacIntyre carves up the era's carefree teen comedies with the aforementioned "base layer," which eventually "opens up" into its dedicated segment. "Tyler wanted to attack the perverted teenage movies of the '90s," Goldbloom says, once again playfully teasing the contents of this particular tape. "In those movies, you had these horny teenagers who got away with these disgusting things. But in a *V/H/S* world, they wouldn't get away with it."

As if sending the likes of *Double Dare* and *American Pie* to hell wasn't enough, Goldbloom reveals that the film itself visits the inferno. "We took *V/H/S* to hell," Goldbloom discloses when discussing Joseph and Vanessa Winters' segment, which descends into rare cinematic territory.

"There aren't many movies that are set in hell, and it's extremely difficult to replicate because everyone has a different idea of what hell is," he says before assuring me that the Winters were more than up to the task. The duo, who caught the eye of the *V/H/S* team with their debut feature *Deadstream*, were a natural fit for the franchise. Goldbloom hails them as "absolute geniuses" who just "get found footage" and "understand movie-making," particularly the "grassroots" style that's become the hallmark of *V/H/S*. "These kids are hungry," he raves. "It's so exciting to see what they're able to pull off" with the franchise's resources behind them.

Goldbloom also assures fans shouldn't fret about *V/H/S* reaching the end of the '90s. He believes the concept has plenty left to explore thanks in part to the enduring popularity of its format. "There's something real about VHS, and there's an aesthetic to it that's entirely unmatched," he muses. "There's something unsettling about it because it is older. It feels ghostly, and it brings a new level to the viewing experience."

When asked about the future of the franchise, he insists "the sky's the limit" before batting around several ideas, like, "Who's to say we couldn't do 1999 again, or take it back to the '80s or late '70s?"

In a wilder proposition, Goldbloom suggests doing away with all of the rules and taking the concept to medieval times, anachronisms be damned. "We're not making documentaries here," he reminds me with a laugh, then conceding that he's already thought about taking *V/H/S* where only a few horror series have gone before. "Eventually, we'll get this franchise to space." 💀

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHUDDER

PHOTO COURTESY OF 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS - PHOTO BY MATT KENNEDY

Resurrecting Billy Butcherson (again)

Actor Doug Jones and makeup FX artist Tony Gardner summon the dead for the eagerly anticipated *Hocus Pocus 2*.

By Angel Melanson

"Unfaithful lover long since dead. Deep asleep in thy wormy bed…" So begins the incantation Winifred Sanderson (Bette Midler) uses to raise the corpse of former squeeze Billy Butcherson from his grave. Billy crashes up through the ground, breaking free from the coffin that has held him for centuries, shaking the grave dirt from his matted hair, and making a grand entrance that has solidified itself in the minds of *Hocus Pocus* viewers over the decades. When Disney set out to make a long-awaited *Hocus Pocus 2*, they didn't need a spell to summon Billy Butcherson; they just had to call up actor Doug Jones (*The Shape of Water*, *What We Do in the Shadows*) and makeup FX artist Tony Gardner (*Army of Darkness*, *Freaky*), two legends in their own right.

As we ready ourselves for a sequel twenty-nine years in the making, we caught up with Jones and Gardner to chat about resurrecting an iconic character nearly three decades later.

MONSTER AND MAKER: DOUG JONES AND TONY GARDNER, REUNITED AFTER 29 YEARS.

What's it like coming back to Billy after all this time?

Doug Jones: Surreal is the one word that would sum it all up. I've been asked in years past, 'is there anything you'd love to revisit again?' And I've always said I would love to give Billy Butcherson another go. I've been saying that for decades.

Tony Gardner: It's such a feel-good feeling. It's unreal. It had been talked about for like a decade, and I think producer David Kirschner's been in meetings about it for seven years. In 2020 Doug and I brought Billy back for an online thing that Bette Midler was doing for a fundraiser, but we never expected it to happen.

DJ: The minute any of us, Bette or Sarah [Jessica Parker] or Kathy [Najimy] or me, they say, 'Would you do a sequel if there was one?' and we've all said 'of course!' That's been going on for all these years. To see us all back in our costumes, makeup and wigs again was like no time has passed at all.

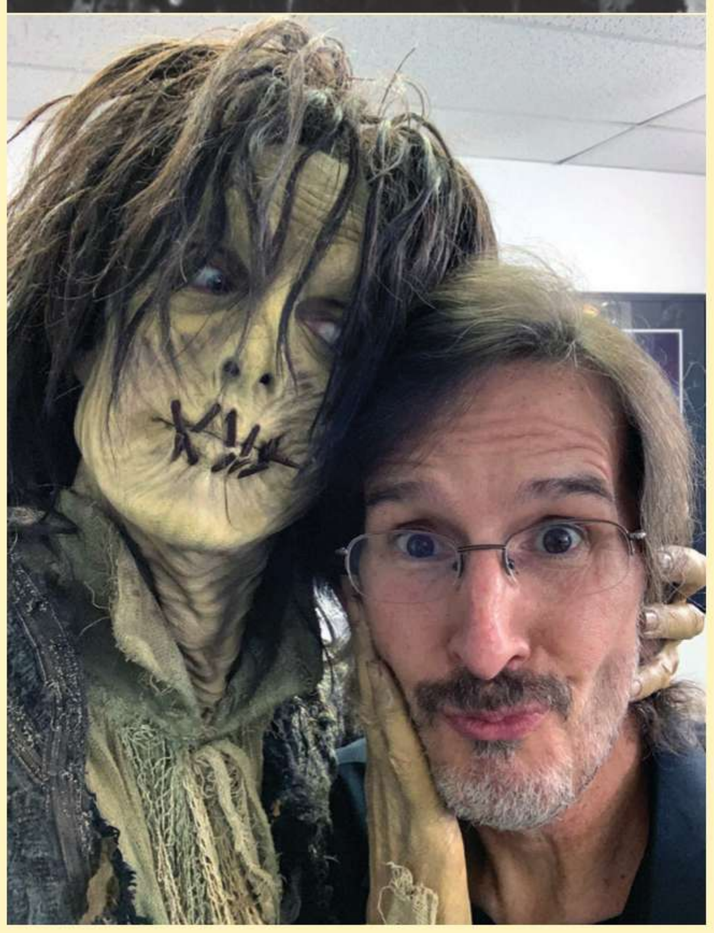
Was there anything different about the process almost 30 years later? Are there different techniques?

TG: There are new techniques and new materials. I debated for a while if we wanted to change things up and upgrade. I felt like it would feel right technically, but while the visual difference would be an improvement, I felt it would be a disservice to the source material. I actually saved his original wig from the first film, so he's wearing his original hair. It's probably the only thing from the first film that's in the sequel.

DJ: They had it sitting on a display in a museum somewhere. It went back on my head and boom, here we are. That wig goes on and you're like 'okay, there's Billy.'

You can't help but know that three decades have gone by, but at

"I actually saved his original wig from the first film, so he's wearing his original hair."
-Tony Gardner



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TONY GARDNER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS - PHOTOS BY MATT KENNEDY

the same time, it's like we are picking up right where we left off. I come up out of the same grave I fell back into in the same condition. The fact that I also haven't gained a pound and my bone structure is still the same, it looked like two minutes have passed in the last 29 years.

The fact that it's the same wig is the most amazing Easter egg.

TG: It's kind of cool. The head mold was nonexistent. The stunt head from the originals is actually on a figure in David Kirschner's office with the original wardrobe on it that I gifted him some 20 years ago thinking he should stare at Billy every day instead of me, because he's the real creator. We did a new cast of Doug's head, put it next to his stone positive from the original film — he looks no different. And we actually used Doug's original 1993 body cast to sculpt the new suit. Everything from the neck down was 30 years old that we built off of. He's actually more fit now. He's more toned and has more muscle and takes really great care of himself. He's a force to be reckoned with. It was so tempting to want to do silicone hand prosthetics and a silicone face and make him look even skinnier and a little more translucent and upgrade the character the way Doug's upgraded himself, but we decided not to.

You look the same, Doug, but did you *feel* the same? This is a physically demanding role.

DJ: I'll tell you, Billy is energetic, he's goofy. He's stiff in places, loose and disjointed in other places, and he's connected with dust so things fall off. It's such a fun, physical character to play with. When you're doing it at the age of 32 versus 61, it does feel different.

The first thing I shot was a scene in which I had to stumble up a staircase and burst into a doorway. Going upstairs, take after take, and the stumbling business, looking like you're about to fall over, takes a lot of energy indeed, but it was great fun to find Billy again.

BILLY (JONES) FINDS A NEW PAL IN GILBERT (SAM RICHARDSON).

How else was this experience different from 1993?

TG: Our makeup trailer for the original was literally a wood-paneled, old rickety single trailer you pull on the back of a motor home with these weird gross curtains on this one, teen tiny little window. We went from that to an actor's motor home to use as the makeup room for Doug. We turned the kitchen living room area into his makeup station and hung all the body suits and all the parts and stored all the prosthetics in the bedroom. We had this mobile "Doug Jones Unit" that just traveled around Rhode Island and wherever we stopped, we'd all climb in, and out would walk Billy Butcherson a couple of hours later.

I guess you couldn't really know at the time that Billy was going to become iconic. Maybe he was meant to be a minor zombie sidekick, but Billy is one of the stars of the movie.

TG: So much of that is because of Doug. It's written doing what it's doing, but Doug is bringing so much more life and personality to it. My original intent was basically I was trying to build the zombie version of Ichabod Crane. And then I threw in some Michael Jackson, some Siouxsie and the Banshees, some Adam Ant, some punk rock, and just brought it all together.

DJ: Since I cut my mouth open at the end of the first movie, I come out of the grave talking this time, so you're going to hear a lot more from me. I shot myself in the foot with this by establishing his voice as gravelly and dusty. Every day I was a little bit sore in the voice, but it was my own fault. I established the voice myself and there it is, but it makes him kind of fun.

He's one of my most beloved characters I've ever played. I get asked about favorites all the time and I have a handful, I suppose, but he's certainly one that lives in my heart still. I was a zombie before zombies were cool. 💀

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

JONES FINDS HOPPING IN AND OUT OF GRAVES IS HARDER WORK AT 61 THAN 32.

SICK

SICK

BY SEAN ABLEY

After years in development you-know-where, Clive Barker's **HELLRAISER** gets a skin-deep makeover from director David Bruckner & Co.

Hellraiser, Clive Barker's deep dive into the concept of "fuck around and find out," was unleashed upon the world in 1987. After suffering through what he considered the bad direction of two feature films based on his original screenplays—the underwhelming _Underworld_ (1985) and _Rawhead Rex_ (1986)—Barker was driven to take the directorial reins on his third feature, an exploration of unbridled hedonism, pleasure extremism and magic via BDSM sexual play. Based on his own novella, "The Hellbound Heart," which was in turn inspired by Barker's experiences as a sex worker and his discovery of the S&M kink scene, _Hellraiser_ would open to mixed reviews, but ultimately establish itself as a classic.

Hellraiser reboot talk percolated as far back as 2006, when Barker himself was attached to deliver a new script. But in the grand Hollywood tradition, pitches from both horror heavyweights and genre newbies were cast into the fires of development hell for more than a decade. However, in a rare happy ending, a genre favorite whose writing, directing and producing work included everything from co-writing Christopher Nolan's _Batman_ trilogy, to working with Neil Gaiman and Allan Heinberg on the current television adaptation of Gaiman's _Sandman_ comic series, would eventually get his hands on that damned box. Enter David Goyer.

"My producing partner Keith Levine used to work at Dimension way back when, and he'd been involved in unfortunately making a number of not particularly great _Hellraiser_ sequels," Goyer recalls. "He'd been stymied in trying to make much better _Hellraiser_ sequels." Eventually the rights were secured by Spyglass Media Group, the current home of the _Scream_ franchise. "As soon as we heard that, we contacted Spyglass and met with them and said we had a notion for… a reinvention."

Not just a hired gun, Goyer is a longtime fan of the source material. "I was reading Clive Barker ever since _Books of Blood_," he offers when asked how he found his way to _Hellraiser_. "Keith and I both felt, as did [director] David Bruckner, that the original _Hellraiser_ was an incredibly inventive and foundational movie for us."

HOOKED: BRANDON FLYNN ENTERS A WORLD OF PLEASURE AND PAIN, WITH SOME HELP FROM MAKEUP FX ARTIST SIERRA RUSSELL.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP - (RIGHT) PHOTO BY SERGEJ RADOVIC

Hellraiser set the genre in a new direction in the late '80s, with a wholly original moral construct within which the characters operated, and some of the most recognizable and enduring iconography in horror cinema. Bruckner calls the film a "masterpiece," which begs the question — why reinvent the wheel of torture? Why now? "I think on some level, these are very bizarre times, and we've maybe been in a rhythm in some corners of the horror world," offers Bruckner. "And I think one thing about _Hellraiser_ is that no matter when you drop it, it's always gonna bring you something very specific, very dark and very weird. And there's an appetite for that right now."

Fans may be hungry for more _Hellraiser_, but with the diminishing returns of nine sequels leaving a bad taste in the mouths of some fans, semantics become significant. Will _Hellraiser_ 2022 be a reboot? Reimagining? Straight-up sequel? "I would say that it's not a universal departure and that it can exist somewhat in the universe that you have seen before," Bruckner explains. "But at the same time, it might be adjacent. It's up to the audience to take it at face value. I don't know that it is a rigid legacy sequel, or reboot, and it's certainly not a remake. It's something else entirely."

Any reboot/reimagining/not-sequel worth its salt introduces something unique to the mix, and Goyer points to _Hellraiser_ 2022's mythology, plus a new-found versatility of that most iconic of horror film sex toys — the puzzle box. "There are six different

configurations in our story. The box actually takes six different shapes as you progressively solve the puzzle." And this is exactly what initially drew Bruckner to the project. "I love the idea that where the box is at in its formation, what shape it is, has meaning and affects the story. It was fun to take this culty, bizarre, mechanical puzzle box that we've seen so many times and allow it to do things we hadn't seen before, and to build tension and suspense out of that."

And for those wondering, Bruckner assures us yes, the boxes are practical, and had to be designed in a way that allowed the actors to solve the puzzles during their scenes. "We had to learn how to get the puzzles right. And if people are paying attention, the symbols and the details line up in certain ways; there is an order to it." To that end, Bruckner has nothing but appreciation for the box design team. "[The box] was way more complex than I had thought… It's actually quite difficult to create a puzzle."

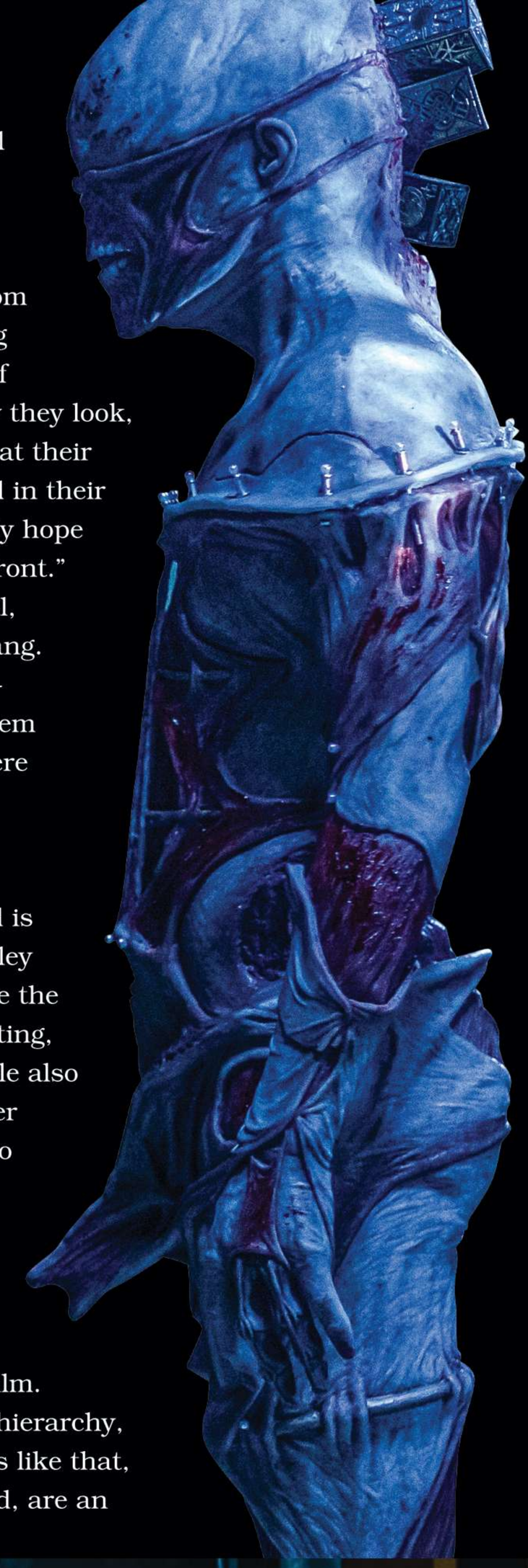
Solving the puzzle and opening the box remain very consequential in the new film. And where there are consequences, there are Cenobites. But for a film firmly rooted in kink and BDSM, the edgy black leather look of the late '80s has become a bit passe in the '20s. "Kink isn't quite as counterculture as it once was," observes Bruckner. "It's all very above board." The solution? Make the Cenobites even kinkier. "This led us to this place where the Cenobites don't really wear clothes at all, but they're modified to such a degree — their skin is flayed and tailored in such elaborate ways — that they kind of *are* their own leather." The Cenobites as imagined by Lead Concept Designer Keith Thompson are fresh-wound fashionable. "They're terrifying to witness, but also beautiful."

While stressing the film isn't an origin story, Bruckner reaches back to the original for his take on these agents of pain. "One of the things that stuck with me from the original film that I wanted to get a grasp on was 'Demons to some, angels to others,' Pinhead's answer to 'What are you?'" he explains. "We talked a lot about the idea that the other Cenobites are not so much seen as they are witnessed."

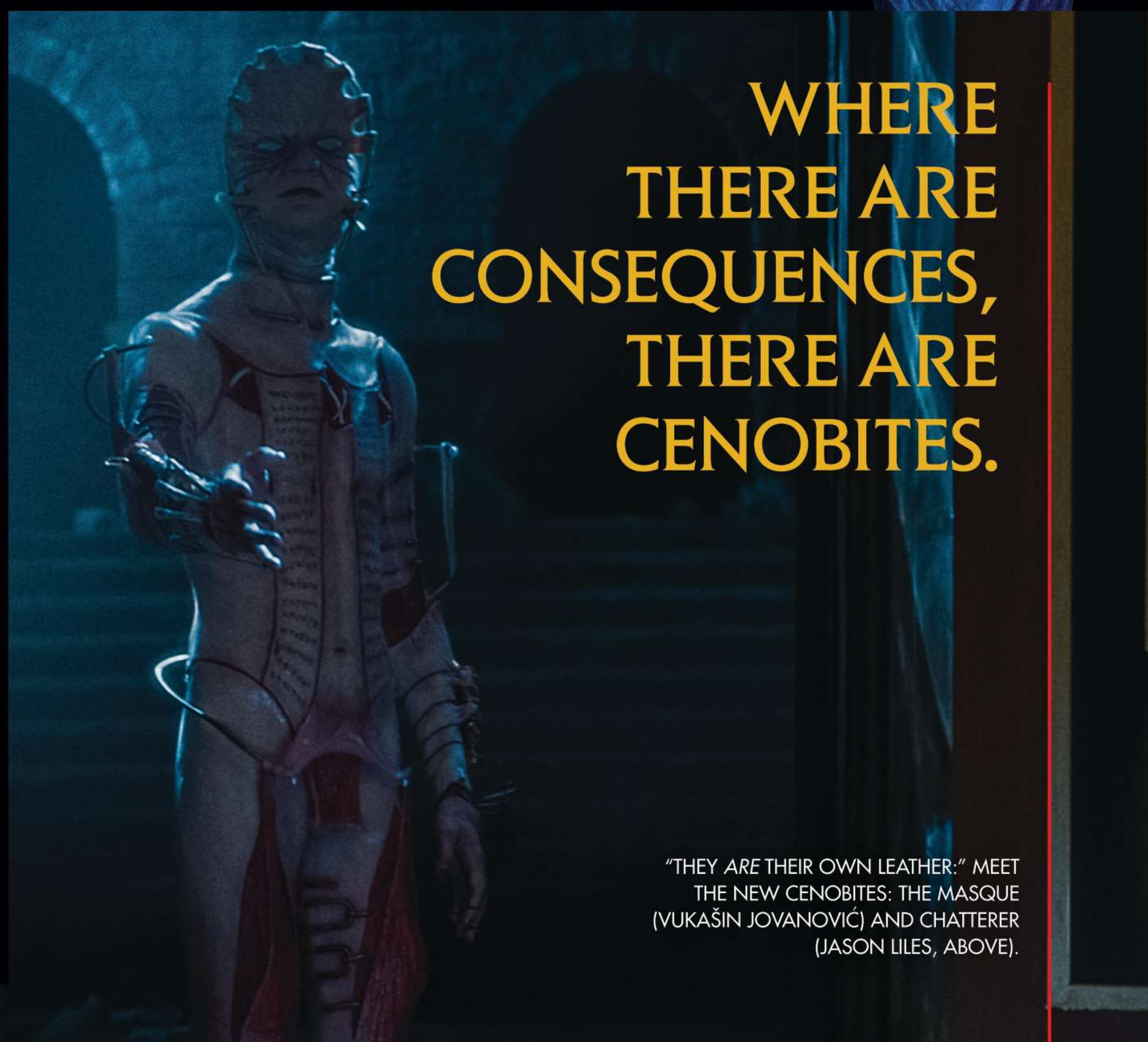
And there will be a bit more backstory for those paying attention. "You will begin to learn how Cenobites are created in our film, which is something cool that people might not necessarily expect," Goyer tells FANGORIA. Bruckner agrees, while also managing our expectations. "There *are* answers in the film. I learned from working with Keith, that you're really telling a parallel story in design. So, there's a lot of information that exists in the margins; how they look, the way they interact with the universe, what their particular hierarchy is — all that is inferred in their behavior, and can be taken as you see it. My hope is that there's a lot coming across on that front."

Along with the new mythology in general, Bruckner wanted to go old school for the gang. "In later films they took on a bit of a Judeo-Christian backstory, and you envisioned them in that version of Hell. So we've started where the first movie began, which is a bit more interdimensional Hell; it's more 'labyrinth of the mind.'"

One of the great horror villains, Pinhead is almost inextricably tied to actor Doug Bradley (save for one quickie sequel meant to secure the franchise rights). But reboots require recasting, and to accommodate a Pinhead refresh while also honoring what (and who) came before, Goyer used the lack of the character's backstory to expand the Cenobite team roster. "We call the character 'Pinhead,' but that's not the character's name. We never know the character's name," he reminds us. Indeed, Pinhead was originally denoted as "Lead Cenobite" in the credits for the first film. "In my imagining, if the hell priests have a hierarchy, you've got bishops and cardinals and things like that, then the 'pinheads,' for lack of a better word, are an



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP - (TOP) PHOTO BY SLOBODAN PIKULA



"THEY *ARE* THEIR OWN LEATHER:" MEET THE NEW CENOBITES: THE MASQUE (VUKAŠIN JOVANOVIĆ) AND CHATTERER (JASON LILES, ABOVE).

SIERRA RUSSELL CHECKS ON CHATTERER (JASON LILES); (BELOW) RILEY (ODESSA A'ZION) LAMENTS HOW SHE GOT TO THIS POINT.

echelon within that hierarchy. So in my mind, there are multiple pinheads embodied by multiple actors and multiple people, and we're meeting a different one."

Horror fandom was abuzz when Jamie Clayton was announced as the new Pinhead among the pinheads. Certainly a different presence than Bradley, the actress is probably best known to Fango readers as a series regular on The Wachowskis' Netflix sci-fi series, *Sense8*. As for casting someone who wasn't male as Pinhead, Goyer and company considered a bigger picture. "We approached Pinhead in a similar way that Neil (Gaiman) and Allan (Heinberg) and I approached the casting of Lucifer in *Sandman*, because we felt that first of all, Lucifer is a fallen angel, and so in that case, angels feel like they encompass all genders. And hell priests in *Hellraiser*, if they are also kind of fallen angels, they should also encompass more than one gender, many genders." Bruckner harkens back to the original novella as another source informing casting. "*The Hellbound Heart* talks about 'Its voice, unlike that of its companion, was light and breathy — the voice of an excited girl.'" With this direct reference, and the omnipresent fan art and fiction imagining Pinhead as female, Bruckner became excited by the possibilities. "We'd be missing out if we didn't include everyone in the casting process."

When it came to casting Clayton specifically, Goyer was immediately enthusiastic about the possibility of her take on Pinhead. "When Jamie became available, we really leapt at casting her. She just felt right in so many different ways – having her felt fresh and interesting and different." Bruckner was energized by the casting. "She was absolutely the best person for the role, and I think she brings a lot to it that will be fresh for audiences. It is a different take than Doug's take," he acknowledges, "and it really has to be. That relieves the burden for the audience of trying to imagine the movies as they were and allows them to go in new directions."

Goyer, Bruckner and co-screenwriters Ben Collins and Luke Piotrowski saw opportunities not only to reimagine the *Hellraiser* world by adding new twists to established plot elements, but to explore new storytelling possibilities as well. To that end, the plot of 2022's *Hellraiser* moves beyond pleasure-seeking in a strictly sexual sense to desire in general. Whereas in the original film Frank is punished for his single-minded pursuit of pleasures of the flesh at all costs, addiction is the lens through which the quartet presents Barker's hellbent morality tale.

Treading lightly so as not to spoil the film, Bruckner offers this synopsis: "Our story follows a young woman (played by Odessa A'zion) struggling

"THERE ARE SIX DIFFERENT CONFIGURATIONS IN OUR STORY. THE BOX ACTUALLY TAKES SIX DIFFERENT SHAPES AS YOU PROGRESSIVELY SOLVE THE PUZZLE."

- David Bruckner

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP - (TOP) PHOTO BY SERGEJ RADOVIC

with addiction who is tempted by the puzzle box and inadvertently draws someone she loves into its orbit. And so she has to bargain with, and ultimately please, the Cenobites in an attempt to get them back."

For Goyer, this new focus was all about tethering a fantastical story to an earthly audience's experience, while using what was truly already present in the material to do so. "What is the real-world analog that makes this relatable? Whether it's speed, whether it's autoeroticism, any of these things, addiction felt like that was always part of the DNA of *Hellraiser*."

Bruckner has nothing but high praise for A'zion, the daughter of Pamela Adlon (TV's *Better Things*) and filmmaker Felix O. Adlon. "She's a joy to work with. Every take is different. She's absolutely fearless and preoccupied with making it real, and incredibly sharp and fast and will catch me if I've got it wrong. I think you're gonna get from Odessa a different horror protagonist than we've seen in a while."

So considering all the thought and care and reverence with which this team approached their vision of Hell on earth, the obvious question is: was Clive involved?

"Clive came on when we were in prep," Bruckner reveals. "He can be very supportive, but also knows when to challenge us, which is very helpful as a collaborator." Goyer adds, "We sent him the script, sent him the designs of the Cenobites. He's somebody that we look up to and admire, and we wanted his take on all of this and we would never have imagined proceeding without getting his input."

In the end, all involved want to assure fans of the original that this new take on an old favorite is in good hands. "I don't adapt something that I'm not genuinely a fan of, that I'm not interested in, and I don't believe in changing something to change it," Goyer states definitively. "I don't believe in going against the DNA or the grain of what it is that you're adapting. So we absolutely honor it." And speaking for the team he says, "We all loved *Hellraiser*. It stuck with us and we wanted to create a Hellraiser for a new generation."

SELINA LO WORKS WITH DIRECTOR DAVID BRUCKNER TO BRING GASP TO LIFE.

THE MAKEUP TEAM READIES ASPHYX (ZACHARY HING).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP - (MIDDLE) PHOTO BY SERGEJ RADOVIC - (BOTTOM) PHOTO BY SLOBODAN PIKULA

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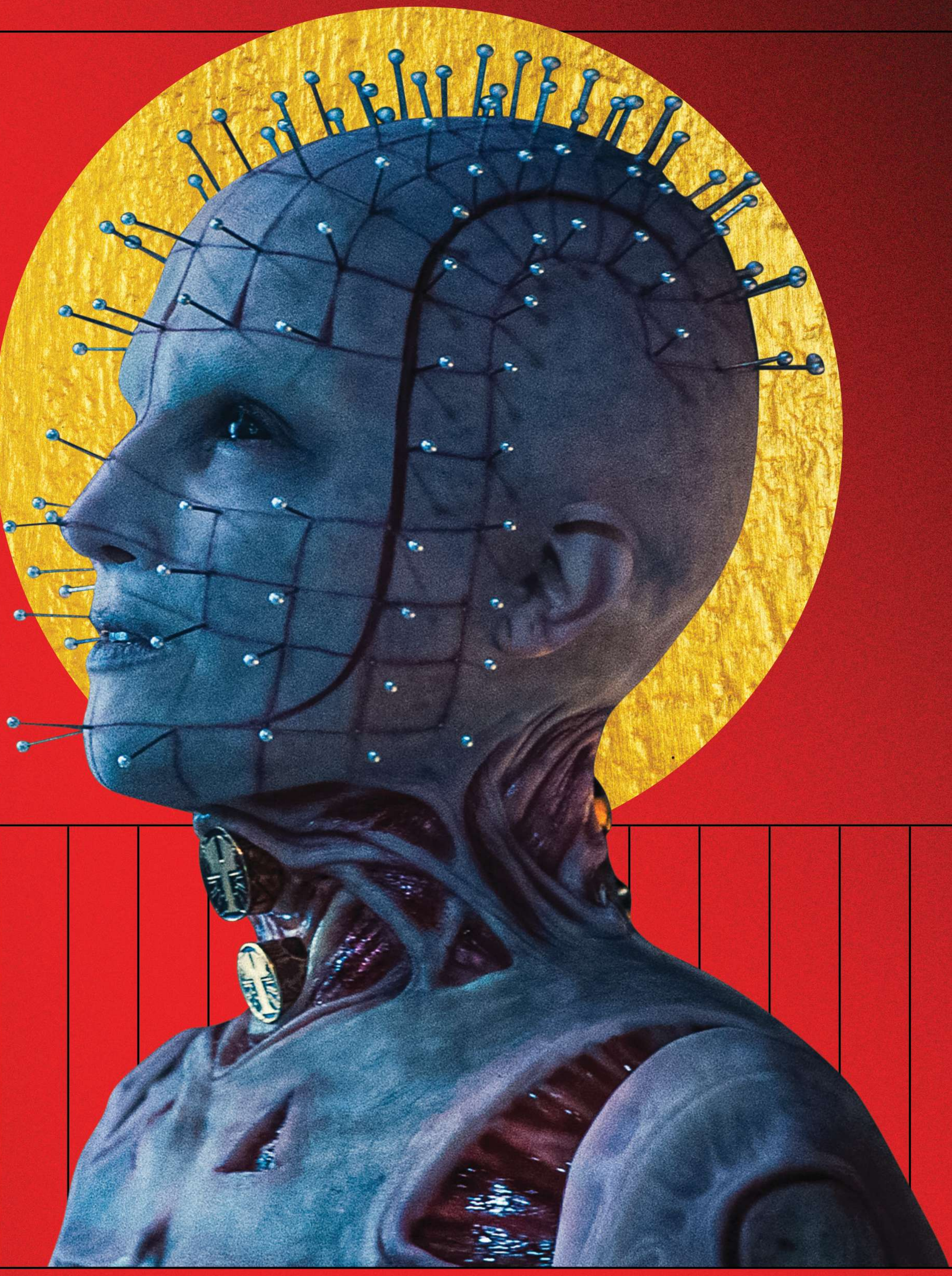

HELLRAISER'S

JAMIE CLAYTON IS MORE THAN READY TO DRAG YOU TO HELL

BY HARMONY COLANGELO

In 1987, a lustful realm of torture, blood, and ecstasy was unleashed upon the world with Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*. A tour de force of low-budget filmmaking, Barker's directorial debut boasts impressively timeless practical effects, seductive pacing, and one of the genre's most memorable monsters. Over the last 35 years, the *Hellraiser* franchise has had its ups and downs, but no tears, please – it's a waste of good suffering. David Bruckner, director of *The Ritual* and *The Night House*, is reinventing the iconic property for a new generation, with the franchise clawing its way back from the underworld in a film starring Jamie Clayton as the punctured priest best known as "Pinhead." FANGORIA had the honor of sitting down with Clayton to talk about her taking over the mantle as The Priest, and what fresh hell awaits us in *Hellraiser*.

Clayton tells us that the role, while a departure for her, fits right in with her career plans. "When I started my acting career, the one thing I've wanted is diversity within my body of work as it expands and grows. I want the opportunity to do lots of different things." Nevertheless, when she got the call to audition, "I was incredibly intimidated. There was a part of me that didn't think that I could do this." That doubt, Clayton says, ultimately morphed into fearlessness and fueled her approach. "I felt it was such a long shot that I just had so much fun with it, and ultimately I think that's what got me the part."

As is the case with every reboot, comparisons to the original film from fans and critics alike are unavoidable. The elephant in the room (or, in this case, the globby, skinless houseguest in the bedroom) will likely be with the portrayal of Pinhead. Although Doug Bradley, who originated the role in 1987, hasn't played the character since 2005's *Hellraiser: Hellworld*, Bruckner's decision to cast a woman as Pinhead is sure to cause a stir among certain members of the Hellraiser fanbase.

"It's a completely different interpretation," she says. "I think that it was really smart on David's

LAUREN SPENCER AND SIERRA RUSSELL APPLY AN UNHOLY AMOUNT OF MAKEUP TO JAMIE CLAYTON.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP - (RIGHT) PHOTO BY SERGEJ RADOVIC

part." Clayton tells me it was Bruckner's idea to open the casting of the Cenobite to women, including trans women because, "he sees us as women, which is just fantastic."

Clayton tells FANGORIA that the role is a departure in more ways than one. "David and I talked a lot about the pleasure through pain the Cenobites are experiencing. There's this constant wave they're riding of their own pleasure combined with a hunger to help their subjects discover what would bring them the most pleasure. That was so interesting for me to play with… the hunger, the need to fuck about with these people in order to convince them they could be enjoying themselves in ways they never imagined."

Clayton also notes that opening the casting to non-cis men is actually more closely in line with Clive Barker's novella, *The Hellbound Heart*. "The Priest is not described as having any sort of discernible gender. If anything, the language that is used to describe The Priest skews heavily femme," Clayton says. "And I feel like casting The Priest as a woman in our re-imagining takes the burden off of the need to compare the performance, because I think that any guy stepping into the role… Oh God, what a burden, because you're just going to be compared to Doug." She says that by Bruckner's casting a woman, and specifically her, the performance is less likely to be compared because it's an entirely different version of the character. "It's my take on it."

And Clive Barker's original story attaches even more overt queerness to the Cenobites than the films do, as they're all depicted as lavish, powerful, and ambiguously sexy in their gender presentation. The aesthetic is based on the gay BDSM scene of the 1980s, and the Cenobites' existence in Hell (literally, the underground) reflected the state of queerness during the height of the AIDS epidemic. In the nearly four decades since, queer people have been allowed a greater visibility, but with that comes open and indiscreet targeting. In the time-honored tradition of horror as an honest reflection of reality, the real "monsters" of *Hellraiser* weren't the queers covered in leather and spikes.

"Back then they just weren't allowed to have it be overtly queer," Clayton continues. "Another thing David has done, other than wanting to cast a woman in the role of The Priest, was that he went really broad with casting the Cenobites," she says. "There's a myriad of ethnicities and genders [represented there], which I think is really fucking cool." Clayton took solace in knowing that the diversity onscreen was an authentic decision, and that nothing was tokenized or merely an excuse to tick a box. "I really hope that the audience sees and feels what an incredible job they did in the writing and casting of these characters," she says.

> **"THERE WERE BIG PARTS OF MYSELF THAT I BROUGHT TO THIS ROLE, BUT THERE WAS A LOT THAT I HAD TO FIND BECAUSE IT WAS SO DARK, IT'S SO SEXUAL AND AGGRESSIVE AND DANGEROUS AND TERRIFYING AND SENSUAL."**
>
> **- Jamie Clayton**

Given the source material, *Hellraiser* is, was, and will always be queer, but Clayton says the new take also feels closer to the representation we see in our daily lives. "There's that saying that I love that's like, 'If you look around your group of friends and everybody looks like you, you need to get some new friends.' It's that," she says. "This movie looks like a diverse group of people, which is what life is."

The exploitation of trans panic within horror has left a long-lasting impression on both fans of the genre and the general public at large. This has birthed a tumultuous relationship, to say the least, because of the expectations many viewers are conditioned to have when witnessing any deviance in gender. Even with the source material being as outwardly queer as it is, Jamie Clayton's transness has remained a focal point of discussion, despite not being central to the character of The Priest or the plot of the new *Hellraiser*.

"There were big parts of myself that I brought to this role, but there was a lot that I had to find because it was so dark," she says. "It's so sexual and aggressive and dangerous and terrifying and sensual. Not that I'm not all of those things, but I'm so grateful that I've been given the opportunity to do this, because I don't want to be limited in this industry by my transness." Clayton has fought tooth and nail for her place, and she doesn't subscribe to the idea that only trans people should play trans roles. "The problem is that we're not allowed into the room for anything other than trans roles," she says. "If people look at my portrayal of The Priest and say, 'Oh my God, I love what she did with the role! Oh my God, she's so amazing in this and blah, blah, blah,' and they *want* the priest to be trans, then she's trans. It's art."

She continues: "I just want the opportunity to be able to do my craft, and it's finally happening for me, this thing that I've been fighting for forever."

Recently, there's been a dangerous trend of overcorrection in representation at all intersections of marginalized people, and unfortunately, this overcorrection inadvertently dehumanizes those it's meant to help by depicting them in a limited and unrealistic way. Portraying trans actresses or characters as anything short of a paragon in heels sets them up for scrutiny that simply isn't applied

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP - PHOTO BY SERGEJ RADOVIC

GOOD SUFFERING: CLAYTON ENJOYS THE OH-SO-GLAMOROUS LIFE OF A MOVIE STAR ON THE SET OF *HELLRAISER*.

to other women in morally complex or villainous roles. “I mean, there are going to be people who [will be] mad,” Clayton says, but knows that’s ridiculous. “I literally don’t see it any differently than Jennifer Lawrence playing Mystique in the *X-Men* movies or Charlize Theron playing her character in *Monster*,” she continues. “Any actor who dons prosthetics and plays a character, it’s no different, and to constantly put my transness and the burden of representing the trans community on me is so unfair.”

Besides (or perhaps alongside) such a representation milestone, Clayton wants us to know there’s a damn good horror film to be enjoyed here. “I’ve been very excited for people to see what it is, to get lost in it, and stay up all night terrified. I really hope that people get caught up in what I did and don’t see Jamie. I hope they just see The Priest and how beautiful and terrifying she is.”

On donning the iconic, modified skin of *Hellraiser*’s most famous Cenobite, Clayton promises, “I am, dare I say, unrecognizable in this film. It’s a completely different part, beast, animal, enigma for me to have taken on. It was the hardest role I’ve ever played - emotionally, mentally, and physically.” The actress is also quick to point out the work put into the character by the FX team, led by Josh and Sierra Russell (see pg. 52). “I cannot wait for everyone to see what they came up with. It is so beautiful and so frightening and so otherworldly.”

She’s quick to add that this transformation that’s sure to please came, perhaps fittingly for this franchise, from her pain. “This was my first experience with prosthetics, and it was A LOT. The suit itself has no give, so it’s not possible to take a full, deep breath. The face is one whole appliance completely glued on so facial movement is very limited. And once the neck piece goes on… forget it!”

To top it off, Clayton found herself unable to deploy a trusted secret weapon in her acting arsenal. “The scleral contacts limited me from expressing through my eyes the way I’m used to with my acting. David was so good at directing me to a place where I could maintain the incredible stillness, but also convey a hunger and lust through small facial movements and my eyes,” Clayton shares. “I definitely found ways to cope while working those long days: a private holding area, Schweppes Bitter Lemon on ice, Sierra telling me ‘you’re so fucking hot.’ But I would not say I loved it.”

If there’s one thing that can be counted on from horror fans, it’s that they recognize and appreciate talent and ambition – possibly more than any other film fans in the world. There will surely be those that decry this entry for what it isn’t rather than love it for what it is, but come *Hellraiser* or highwater, this entry will be defended to the death by those who love it. With any luck, the film may even restore the franchise to the gory glory of its earliest entries.

“I have no idea what’s gonna happen, but I had such an incredible time making this film. I’m hoping that fans of the originals will see this and be like, ‘Oh my God, this is the thing that we’ve been waiting for,’ and that word of mouth will spread,” Clayton says. “And I hope that fans of mine who are horror fans will see this and say, ‘She fucking slayed it!’ 💀

UNDER THE RUBBER: JAMIE CLAYTON IS UNRECOGNIZABLE IN *HELLRAISER*.

PHOTO BY GABRIEL MAGDALENO

> “I AM, DARE I SAY, UNRECOGNIZABLE IN THIS FILM. IT’S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PART, BEAST, ANIMAL, ENIGMA FOR ME TO HAVE TAKEN ON.”
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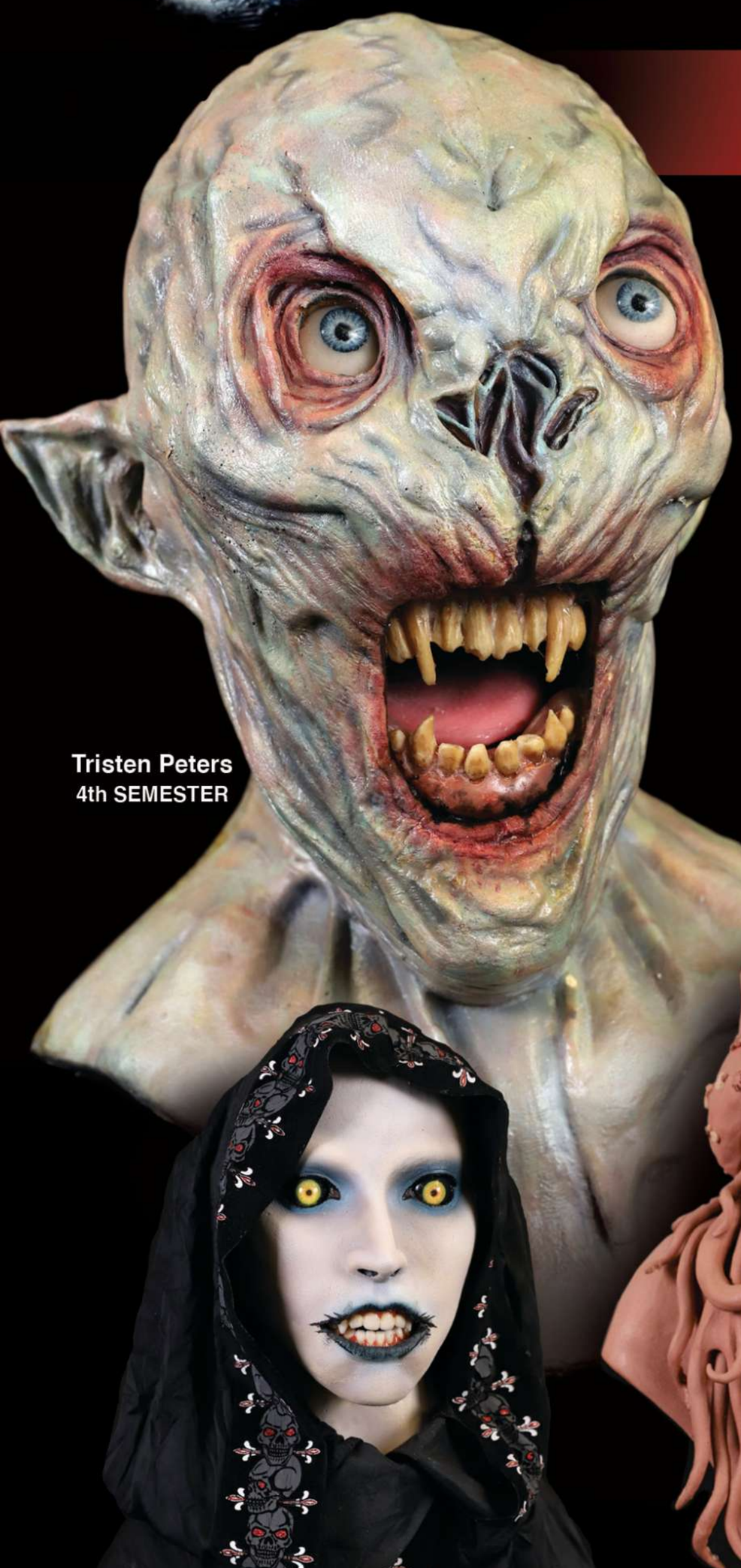

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AN EXPERIENCE BEYOND LIMITS

Makeup FX artists Josh & Sierra Russell savor the pleasure and pain of bringing a new HELLRAISER to life.

By Kalyn Corrigan

Although we've now been friends for years, I had unwittingly been absorbing Josh and Sierra Russell's impressive body of work long before meeting them. You name it, they've done it: *The Ritual*, *The Night House*, *Deadwax*, *NCIS*, *Bliss*, *XX*, *Southbound*, *Dementia: Part II*, *Psychopaths*, *Narcos*. The pair have become famous for their hyper-realistic corpses, their surprisingly lifelike blood spatter, their shockingly convincing FX gags and, increasingly of late, for their unique monsters. It's no wonder when longtime collaborator David Bruckner was handed the keys to the *Hellraiser* kingdom, the Russells were the team he deemed worthy to bring a new vision of Clive Barker's Cenobites to the big screen.

It was an honor to sit down with these two masters to reflect on the past year, to talk about how they poured their souls into this project, the challenges and triumphs of the gig, and what they learned while helping to re-imagine a horror classic.

PHOTO BY JOÉL VERGES

What was your reaction upon learning you'd landed the FX job for the new *Hellraiser* movie?

Josh Russell: I saw a missed call from Dave Bruckner followed by a text, saying "call me back when you can. Got a question for you. Kinda important." So I called and he put me on speaker phone with producer Keith Levine and they offered us the job. I sorta laughed involuntarily and said "I feel like I won the lottery, but I had to work really hard to do it."

Sierra Russell: I remember it taking a while to set in. The feeling was indescribable, but I think I manifested the job to happen because I didn't want to let younger me down. I've always wanted to be an artist and I've wanted to work on movies at a young age and I think with those desires I would bring nothing but heart and respect with me.

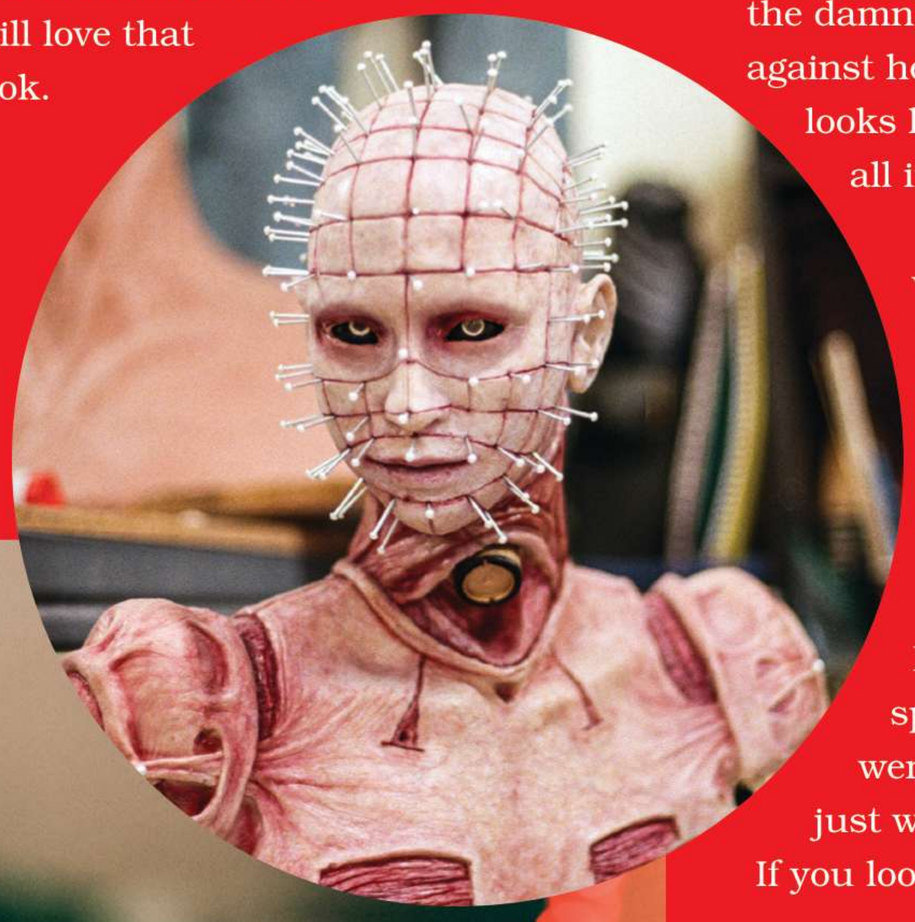
How did you go about bringing a brand-new version of Pinhead to life?

SR: Once we were given some early concept designs created by the ever so talented Keith Thompson, the one idea that seemed definitive and unique for this reboot is that Cenobites were made of only their own flesh and viscera, keeping an elegantly horrific juxtaposition, and staying away from human, worldly clothes. Josh and I were very excited for this idea and our creative brains went into a flurry. We wanted to make our own tangible design and we needed to do it quickly, so in three days we made a full bust, and then we made some variations to that bust. We also wanted to show our own twist to the ideas with a little more "meat stretch," or other ways to change composition.

"DOING PINHEAD'S MAKEUP WAS THE COOLEST THING I COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED MYSELF DOING... I WAS TERRIFIED."

The other challenge was the iconic pins for Pinhead. I researched so many different kinds and styles and metals.

JR: We sourced every interesting looking pin or nail we could find. Our first version was gold with round heads and we still love that look.



We tried horseshoe nails that had an interesting handmade look we've never seen before, but it looked too much like a Marilyn Manson video. Clive Barker's original novella *The Hellbound Heart* describes jewel-headed pins. We tried various jewels which had the elegant look they wanted, but it was too busy.

Ultimately, the designs were really pushing for pearls. Every Cenobite has them somewhere on the body, twisting their flesh. We ended up making the pins with costume pearls glued to plastic rods that were painted with an iridescent silver. It was the right move, because there are shots in the film where she is backlit and the damn things are glowing so bright against her shadowed face that it looks like a VFX trick, but it was all in camera.

And then Dave conferred with us for a long time on the casting decision. It's a holy grail balance you have to strike between someone with the chops to deliver a nuanced performance without doing a Doug Bradley impression, and a specific facial structure. There were some great auditions that just wouldn't work for the makeup. If you look back at young Doug

NEW FLESH: JOSH RUSSELL OVERSEES JAMIE CLAYTON'S TRANSFORMATION INTO PINHEAD.

(LEFT + RIGHT) PHOTOS BY JOËL VERGES - (TOP) PHOTO BY KALYN CORRIGAN

Bradley, he had a very thin face with sunken cheeks and wide ears; perfect to add a layer over without getting bulky. We saw some people who had a great look but were just too full-faced and we knew the prosthetics would make them look like “Thicc Pinhead.” We've seen that before and the fans didn't seem to take to it very well.

Once Jamie Clayton came up, there was no need to keep looking. Jamie has very narrow and sharp features; she also has a very exuberant and expressive face. You need to exaggerate expressions to read through heavy makeup, and Jamie was able to push it without ever going over the top.

So she’s cast, the makeup is designed, and you’re on the set of *Hellraiser*, creating a new Pinhead with Jamie. No pressure, right?

SR: Doing Pinhead’s makeup was the coolest thing I could have ever imagined myself doing. So with the weight of that, I was terrified in application every time. Jamie is an amazing talent and held up so well in a four-hour application process, and then having to have a long day

"CENOBITES ARE MADE OF ONLY THEIR OWN FLESH AND VISCERA, STAYING AWAY FROM HUMAN, WORLDLY CLOTHES."

(LEFT MIDDLE) PHOTO BY JOÉL VERGES

sitting in it and performing. We were first in and last out, and it takes a toll on health and well-being, but we stuck together. We eventually learned our communication and I noticed the parts of the process she liked and disliked, giving me an ability to change or augment how it was done.

Again, Josh and I didn't want to do a multilayered makeup if we didn't have to, so we made a two-piece makeup with a cowl that puzzle-pieced together with the face, and a separate neck piece to go over all the seams and bring the makeup together. The cowl head piece would already have the pins secured, so that saved a lot of time. I would say, and I'm sure (original *Hellraiser* makeup artist) Gary Tunnicliffe would agree, the pins are a bane. Doing a silicone makeup can be difficult with consistency and doing a foam latex piece would take longer for application. We chose to stick with silicone for many reasons.

There were too many moments with Jamie that were memorable. Having a gorgeous woman in a Pinhead makeup making sarcastic jokes or sexy dancing. Anything Jamie did once she was in makeup made me giddy and smile, even if we were both having a hard day. Love you, Jamie!

Who did you bring onboard to sculpt Chatterer? How did that character come together?

SR: One thing that made it easier to acquire amazing artists for the show was the name *Hellraiser* itself. We knew Mikey Rotella's art style would match perfectly for Chatterer. We were lucky enough he at the time was working with Jaremy Aiello and Dave Grasso, so all he had to say was "*Hellraiser*" and they were more than happy to be a part of it. For the first sculpture that Mikey did for Chatterer, we wanted to incorporate the dark sensuality that Clive Barker does so well and have him take it further. Make it overtly sexual, indomitable and monster-like, but somehow dignified.

JR: Mikey's first concept bust was very stylized. Super long neck, long horse-like teeth, and a big orifice on the forehead that you really can't see as anything except a vagina. We joked about it a lot, but it really did fit the look somehow. Dave is very open to ideas and opinions, but this was such a far swing away from the design that he wasn't digging it at first. So I had Mikey do a new pass – this time on the actor's lifecast – that stuck strictly to design. I think because we went so bold up front, Dave couldn't get that out of his head and decided that this was the one Cenobite that should feel like a monster, and so we ultimately met in the middle.

PHOTOS BY KALYN CORRIGAN

BODIES, BODIES, BODIES:
THE RUSSELLS' SHOP BIRTHS
A NEW BATCH OF CENOBITES.

THE 1987 PUZZLE BOX NEVER DID *THAT*.

JOSH READIES A TORSO FOR A SCENE IN WHICH A HUMAN TRANSFORMS INTO A CENOBITE.

Something makeup artists always contend with is trying to preserve your vision as an artist vs. meeting producers' demands and the realities of a production schedule. How was that here?

JR: The biggest frustration in the industry today is the lightning-fast pace. Movies that would have taken two years to develop and build before shooting are now finished and released in half the time. This was actually the longest pre-pro we've ever had, and the longest shoot. But of course we could have wished for more. Our biggest struggle on this film was splitting the work between LA and Belgrade. We had two shops going at once to meet the demands, and of course everyone wants to see finished products ahead of time so they can chime in, so time never really felt like it was on our side.

What are some of the struggles that come with putting actors in such all-encompassing creature suits?

JR: We had a heavy vetting process during casting where Dave would pick his favorite auditions and we would talk to them about what to expect. Being in a head-to-toe silicone suit is hot, sweaty, and claustrophobic. You have limited movement and vision. Lots of people think it sounds so fun to be a monster, then find out how demanding it can be and back out.

SR: The biggest struggle with creature suits is knowing your time frame with production, how many times the suit and makeup will be worn, and how long the day is. Josh and I spoke early in the design stage about how we could make these suits easy for everyone involved. Comfort is something to strive for, but there are not many suit performers for a reason.

Since this is the most Cenobites in any *Hellraiser*, we knew we wanted to keep multilayered makeups to a minimum. One of the hardest makeups to do was Gasp. Since Gasp was to appear naked, we made a very tight body suit. Being in that Gasp suit through some of the hottest conditions and coldest conditions, day after day, took a toll on Selina Lo's body, and one night when we were done shooting, seeing her scrapes and bruises, I almost called her off the next day. We were both in tears that night. How far do you take art and how far can a body go? Of course, Selina is one tough cookie and saw every day through with a smile.

Chatterer's helmet was uncomfortable to say the least, but Jason Liles was a veteran through it. Weeper had minimal sight and difficult heels to walk in, in all kinds of terrain. There wasn't a perfect day for anyone. Everyone held tight and leaned on one another when we had to, and the results show, I think.

What did you learn about yourselves as artists over the course of working on this project?

JR: I found out it's easier to push through a challenge than I thought when you really care about something and failure isn't an option. I know it will have lasting rewards. We made new lifelong friendships and met so many new artists; the rewards are already there.

SR: This was by far the hardest job ever I've ever undertaken. I've learned to have patience with myself and breathe a little more. I take things too seriously because I take pride in my work, and there is that pesky thing you're supposed to get rid of. I would also say that even when my confidence is beaten down, be it from exhaustion, elements or people, to keep moving forward. Some days I'm in my head screaming, 'is this going to work?' or 'this looks like shit,' but it's only in the beginning, and it takes moving forward and finishing the job to have a sigh of relief and say, 'Okay, I did it! Duh, of course I did it!' 💀

ASPHYX IN PROGRESS (SCULPT BY ALEXI BUSTAMANTE).

PHOTOS BY KALYN CORRIGAN

DIGGING DEEP

BY DREW GRANT

Justin Benson & Aaron Moorhead seek the truth (which is out there) in Something in the Dirt.

IN THEIR NEW FILM, BENSON & MOORHEAD GET COSMIC IN A 1BR APARTMENT.

Longtime collaborators Aaron Moorhead and Justin Benson moonlit on *Moon Knight*, were handed the keys to the kingdom of *Loki* and doubled down on their own cinematic universe in *Something in the Dirt*. How's *your* 2022 going?

"You know, Carl Jung had a theory that we're all hallucinating mandalas," Aaron Moorhead is telling me on a Saturday afternoon over Zoom. Next to him, Justin Benson tilts his seat all the way back, body language reading, "Please don't get him started on Jungian mandalas."

Moorhead and Benson aren't easy to quantify. From their earliest film, the 2012 micro-budget *Resolution*, to their latest, *Something in the Dirt*, these two filmmakers refuse to fit into anyone else's model. For instance, *Resolution*, 2014's *Spring*, 2017's *The Endless* and 2019's *Synchronic* all, to some extent, share the same cinematic horror-verse. Up for debate is where claustrophobic psychological horror *Something in the Dirt* fits in.

Something in the Dirt stars Benson as Levi, a registered sex offender and drifter, and Moorhead as John, a gay militant Christian in the middle of a nasty divorce. They are unlikely protagonists, and maybe even more unlikely companions, but they share a bond of weird: within minutes, they're talking to each other about conspiracy theories. Soon after, Levi finds a crystal skull levitating in his living room. Soon the two are engaged in a supernatural folie-au-deux, addicted to "yes and'ing" each other's increasingly bizarre theories: golden ratios, electro-magnetic force fields, a secret society called The Pythagoreans, the mind-controlling worms in cat feces.

"It's kind of like our brains have weaponized our sense of wonder," Moorhead says of the script. "Our curiosity seems so healthy; we teach and foster it in our kids... It's just that there's this chasm, where you leap from curiosity to defining reality by things that don't have repeatable evidence behind it. Keep your mind open, of course, but beware the chasm you can fall in."

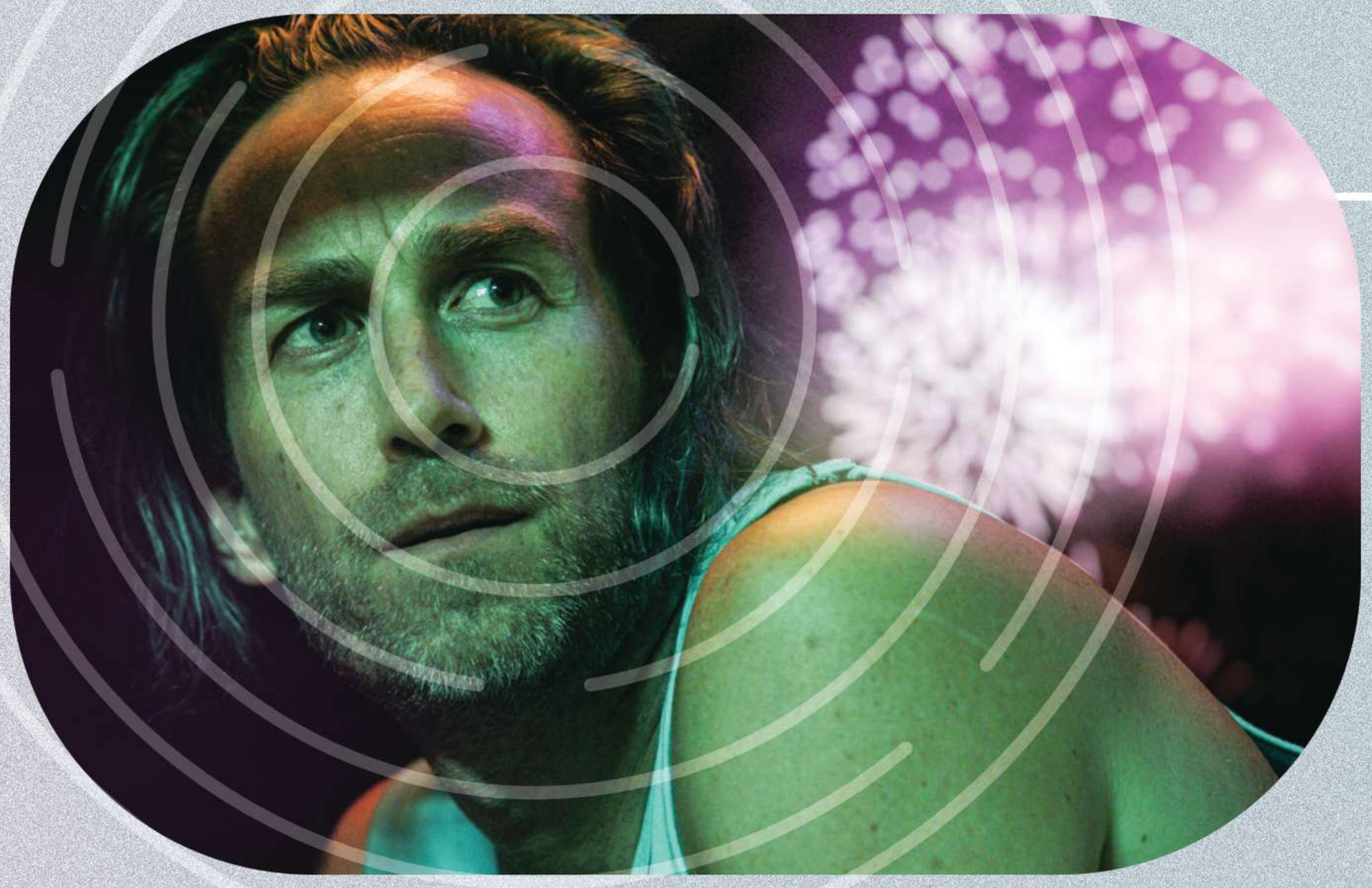
Moorhead and Benson met while interning together at Ridley Scott's commercial production company. Their first full-length feature, *Resolution*, is essentially a two-hander made for $20,000 about a man going up to a remote cabin in the woods so he can handcuff his junkie best friend to a radiator, forcing him into detox. (That's not the scary part.)

"[*Resolution*] was essentially written for this property that my family had acquired under these really bizarre circumstances," Benson says. "We had these weird cabins on the property. So we just wrote a story around what we knew was an interesting location. We knew what skill sets we had in terms of editing, cinematography, what could be achieved with visual effects at that level. Aaron's always been a brilliant visual effects artist."

With a crew of about eight, and a "blitz" post-production period of about a month, *Resolution* made its way via burned DVD to the Tribeca Film Festival, where a programmer "literally or metaphorically" pulled it out of the garbage. Having their first movie be a modest hit on the festival circuit reinforced the two's commitment to high-concept, low-budget, genre-bending filmmaking.

Their follow-up, *Spring*, stars Lou Taylor Pucci as a cook traveling through Italy who falls in love with a succubus. For that, the pair had imagined a backdrop of the Amalfi coast, but couldn't scrounge up the money to shoot.

MOORHEAD AND BENSON AREN'T EASY TO QUANTIFY. FROM THEIR EARLIEST FILM, THE 2012 MICRO-BUDGET *RESOLUTION*, TO THEIR LATEST, *SOMETHING IN THE DIRT*, THESE TWO FILMMAKERS REFUSE TO FIT INTO ANYONE ELSE'S MODEL.



"We had a passionate, thirty-minute pitch," Benson remembers. "We had a little proof of concept God shot that almost killed us," Moorhead adds. On the strength of their script, they were able to sell Pucci hard enough that he went out and immediately shaved his long blond hair into a buzz cut, because he imagined that's what a waiter would have. (Benson and Moorhead hadn't even offered him the part yet.)

After a Cannes meeting with Luca Legnani, "probably the only producer in Italy who could have made this movie," and finding the perfect location to shoot in Apulia, *Spring* was a go.

"People talked about their second movie being this really traumatizing thing. *Spring* was one of the easiest movies we've ever made," Benson says. "Everything went right. Everything went magically correct. Even when it seemed like magic didn't happen, it became magically right."

Two years later, right before they were to begin production on *The Endless*, in which they both star as well as direct, Benson picked up his phone after rehearsal and found 35 missed calls.

"It was my dad," Benson says. "He says, 'Your mom killed herself.'" Benson can only vaguely remember what came next: trying to pack, sobbing in his living room, Moorhead driving him to San Diego. When they get there, Benson finds his dad pacing outside of the house.

"My dad, the first thing he says," Benson recalls, "He says, 'You're still going to make this movie.'"

In *The Endless*, the two brothers at the center of the story, played by Benson and Moorhead, are motherless, having been adopted by a doomsday UFO cult when they were still kids. But *The Endless* isn't really about the horrors of death – when Justin and Aaron return as adults to their childhood enclave, in fact, no one else has aged a day.

"There's maybe no better way to deal with grief than making a movie," Benson says. "That'll keep you distracted – and also, just putting it *into* something. I do think that the movie, as a whole, it does have a very special vibe to it."

The Endless turned out to be Benson and Moorhead's most accomplished feature yet. It's a heady mix of sci-fi, horror and personal drama featuring breathtaking panoramas and their only ensemble cast to date, all hinging on not only the strength of the two's direction, but their performances.

The Endless and *Resolution* also exist as companion films, two parts of a much larger puzzle the filmmakers have been building for decades. No one's seen the whole of it, but to hear Benson and Moorhead tell it, you can imagine it rivaling MCU boss Kevin Feige's in terms of scope.

"There's a much larger universe that exists in Google Docs and conversations than what you've seen in the films," Benson confirms. "It might be interesting to know that for us, *Something in the Dirt* does exist in that universe, but it might take a second or third watch to see to what extent." One imagines a *Twin Peaks* multiverse, but with more hard sci-fi and bromance.

"Our goal for the past ten years and moving forward is to get to a place where we can do [a] TV show and visit that world in a bigger way," Benson says. "Even if that show is completely its own, that it always has that option to go more conspicuously into this universe we've created and revisit characters. It's something we've been building toward for a very long time."

So how did the two feel about going from such intensely niche passion projects to the rarified air of the MCU, which began with the two (arguably most interesting of the season) episodes they directed of *Moon Knight*?

"We're incredibly passionate about it and proud of it, but it is strange where it's like – we literally bled for *Something in the Dirt*," Moorhead says. "We bled for *The Endless* and *Spring* and *Synchronic* and *Resolution*. I mean it: there's no film set of ours where we haven't at least gotten a paper cut." 💀

PHOTOS COURTESY OF XYZ FIMS

DEADSTREAM

THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF SCREENLIFE HORROR

BY ANDREW CRUMP

Time was, folks could stumble on troves of discarded tapes hidden in derelict houses or foreboding woodlands, pop them into a VCR, and behold all manner of terrors on mylar: cannibalism, occult machinations, witchcraft, demonic possession. Watching these tapes meant seeing something nobody was *supposed* to see – often to spare their nerves, always for their own good.

(TOP) ACTOR/PRODUCER MELANIE STONE GOES UNDER MIKAELA KESTER'S SPONGE; STUNT PERFORMER ARIEL LEE AND JOSEPH WINTER RUN THROUGH A CONFRONTATION BEFORE CAMERAS ROLL.

DP/PRODUCER JARED COOK AND FILMMAKERS VANESSA AND JOSEPH WINTER PREP STUNT PERFORMER WEIXIN LE FOR A LITTLE LEVITATION.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHUDDER

Found footage is distinguished from horror's other subgenres with a push against form, applying vérité to material otherwise recognizable as fiction. It either fools us into buying what we're watching as real, or invites us to *imagine* so. Films like *Cannibal Holocaust*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Lake Mungo*, the *V/H/S* series, and *The Last Broadcast* hew closely to horror conventions while presenting themselves as true. For *The Blair Witch Project*, the presentation worked too well, gulling some into believing the footage was genuine. Happy days.

But those days have passed. Stories once told through analog now take root in the internet's infinite vastness, simultaneously a boon and a curse; anyone can find those stories online, as long as someone digitizes them first. Fortunately, the internet's accessibility allows new stories to flourish on contemporary platforms – like Screenlife, demonstrated in movies mocked up to resemble Zoom calls and livestreams, à la *Unfriended*, *Megan is Missing*, *Open Windows*, and *Host*. Now comes the style's latest patch, Vanessa and Joseph Winter's *Deadstream*.

The writer-director-married couple don't consider their movie evolutionary. For them, it's a spook-a-blast film folded into Screenlife. "The thing that we were the most interested in was pushing found footage into an over-the-top comedic creature feature," Vanessa tells FANGORIA. "Could we take something that felt realistic, felt like a livestream, and then really push it to a cinematic, crazy, Sam Raimi type of place by the end of the movie?"

Realism anchors found footage in multiple senses. It gives films the mooring necessary for selling the basic conceit, but keeps them from moving beyond that presentational space. Like other livestream horror films, *Deadstream* sidesteps those limitations by discarding VHS for modern media. The film follows Shawn (played by Joseph), a recently pilloried internet hooligan who stays overnight in a purportedly haunted house, livestreaming the stunt to countervail his disgrace and win back his followers. The house happens to be *extremely* haunted, and its unruly occupants spend the evening trying to evict Shawn from their domicile as well as his mortal coil.

Modeling the livestream format was essential for *Deadstream* as a found footage offshoot. "There's something engaging about watching a livestream, knowing that it's happening in real time," says Vanessa. Drawing that sensation into the film gave the Winters realism that's fundamental to found footage; welding that to horror-comedy meant keeping a strict balance with relentlessly paced jump-out-of-your-seat frights.

The Winters turned to other found footage films for inspiration, but with the exceptions of *The Blair Witch Project* and *[•REC]*, Vanessa explains, the movies they watched "ended up not really translating to what we were trying to do." This led them to an important realization: Classic found footage tends to show little, but *Deadstream* shows *much* more by nature, particularly its second half, where the Winters let the film off the chain and fully into *Evil Dead II* territory.

They didn't set out to make something *better* than found footage, they simply made something distinct from what people think of when they hear the term. *Deadstream* occupies a niche within the niche. The livestream concept lends the movie lasting foundational believability even after going absolutely bonkers siccing deformed angry ghosts on Shawn.

"Obviously the strength of found footage is that it helps you suspend

your disbelief, so that things feel more realistic and scary," Joseph points out. Think about found footage like stage magic: audience proximity enhances the magician's craft and the overall effect of their performance. Likewise, found footage escalates fear by taking viewers one step closer to the horror. *Deadstream*'s livestream conceit takes audiences yet another step toward sheer pants-shitting anxiety.

Found footage's efficacy has another layer, too. Horror relates to the zeitgeist by touching on whatever the culture collectively dreads at any given moment, and found footage's realist pretense heightens the overall effect. "Found footage needs to feel authentic and grounded, since we're so familiar with the aesthetic," says Rob Savage, director and co-writer of 2020's *Host*. The story of a Zoom seance gone terribly wrong, *Host* began as a prank skit that Savage decided to retool as a feature. He, his cast, and his crew shot the picture over Zoom in 12 weeks during the COVID-19 pandemic's peak, when *everybody* was connecting with loved ones using Zoom.

"When we were making *Host*, my main aim was to create a piece that felt totally true to people's experience on the Zoom platform, since so much of our pandemic lives were lived on there," Savage says. Films like *The Blair Witch Project* can't easily dupe audiences anymore – they know how to spot that sleight of hand. Instead, found footage's web-based cousins achieve striking fidelity to plugged-in existence. "Films that accurately mirror the texture of our online lives can come tantalizingly close and trick people momentarily into feeling as though they are watching something uncensored and dangerous," he adds.

Screenlife films mimic the quotidian role software like Zoom plays in our lives. That's chilling enough, whether a Screenlife *Blair Witch* is feasible or not, but the contextual characteristics enabling Screenlife also give it built-in obsolescence. "Found footage dates in a way that conventional horror does not," notes Savage. New technology comes into popular use while old technology sunsets. Savage and his team shot *Host* and *Dashcam*, his other Screenlife movie, within one year, and the speed of production cemented their timely significance. "They were living social documents that spoke to the bizarre realities of pandemic life in a way that a conventional horror never could," Savage says.

This wasn't his intention, just a natural outcome of making Screenlife films just as Screenlife overtook real life. When this era passes, their potency will, too – something Savage acknowledges. "How will these films be viewed in 10 years?" he wonders.

The Winters share similar thoughts regarding *Host* and Screenlife horror. "That won't last much longer," Joseph says. "The thing *Host* did with Zoom, I don't know that there can be a couple more that still make people as universally scared as *Host* did, because it was the first thing that the masses had seen like that." Once the exercise has been done in a certain format, it loses power; once the next format arrives, the prior format slowly phases out, and movies like *V/H/S/94* respond by using tape as a period-setting backbone. Nobody uses tapes today, but they did 30 years ago.

30 years from now, we might not use Zoom, Teams, or Hangouts. We might not watch livestreams, either. If not, films like *Host* and *Deadstream* will feel like relics, just as all but the most indelible found footage films do now, and the genre will feel the loss of what the best Screenlife movies achieved in a limited aesthetic. But that's just one side of the coin. On the other, the genre will experience what's next after Screenlife retires, and filmmakers like Savage and the Winters will be there to make audiences quake over their keyboards all over again. 💀

JUST BECAUSE IT'S FOUND FOOTAGE DOESN'T MEAN IT CAN'T DELIVER THE FX GOODS (COURTESY CREATURE DESIGNER TROY LARSON).

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHUDDER

I Was Haunted By A SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS BALLOON!

MY BEST FRIEND'S EXORCISM Star Amiah Miller Opens Up About Her Wild Horror History

By Grady Hendrix

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO - PHOTO BY ELIZA MORSE

Amiah Miller plays Gretchen Lang in the upcoming adaptation of my book, *My Best Friend's Exorcism*. She turned 18 right before we had this conversation. I'm 49. When I was born, George Romero was six years away from making *Dawn of the Dead*. The year Amiah came into this world, Edgar Wright and James Wan were releasing their debut films (*Shaun of the Dead* and *Saw*), and Zack Snyder had remade Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*. Clearly we grew up in two very different times for horror, so I wanted to touch base with the youngs and see what horror meant to them.

GRETCHEN (AMIAH MILLER) AND ABBY (ELSIE FISHER) CHOOSE NOT TO CURSE THE DARKNESS.

Are you a horror movie person?

No, I'm not. I'm a total scaredy cat. I've seen a lot of horror films, but the only horror books I've read are yours, actually.

Keep it that way.

I've done a few horror films in my day, though, so I'm well-viewed.

Do you watch horror movies for research?

When I did *My Best Friend's Exorcism* I watched a lot of videos of real-life exorcisms because I wanted to be as realistic as possible. We were in Atlanta filming, and I was with my Mom and we were both watching and they were really creepy, no lie.

Where'd you find the footage?

On YouTube. I just typed it in and all these hits came up.

Were they ads?

They were promoting exorcism services, mostly. You know, 'If you think someone you know is possessed, come to us.' They showed people before and after, and the ones who had returned to normal were telling stories about how they'd ruined their lives because of demonic possession and now they were so grateful to be demon-free. It was actually really sweet.

So you only watch horror movies related to movies you're working on.

Exactly, I watch them for work.

So there's not one you've seen a bunch of times?

I feel like in order for someone to watch a horror film over and over again it needs to provide you with some comfort, and I find watching them pretty uncomfortable. [pause] Except for *My Best Friend's Exorcism*, which I'll watch over and over.

So what movies *do* you watch over and over again?

I've seen *Titanic* hundreds of times. I went through a phase where I watched it three times a week. I know that movie word for word.

What happens when a human being watches *Titanic* that many times?

I read a theory that Rose imagined Jack the whole time. She starts the movie super-depressed and hates her life, and Jack helps her overcome it, and if you watch it thinking that he's completely imaginary and she's the only one who can see him, it changes a lot of things. The theory fits! In the scene where they're on the door floating in the ocean, she could just be imagining him to keep herself alive. And then she kills him.

She shoves him right off that door.

She literally says, 'I'll never let you go,' and then she pushes him.

My *Titanic* peeve is that at the end, when Rose is old and dying, they pan around her room and you see all these photos of her family and children, but at the end of her life all she cares about are those three days with Jack. That must sting a little for her husband and her children to realize that they're completely meaningless to her.

And her granddaughter's the one who brought her there! They don't touch on anything else except Jack and, you know, it seemed like she led a pretty full life.

Did a horror movie ever traumatize you?

The first horror film I ever watched was *Lights Out*, at the premiere. I was in one scene and they were so generous to invite me. I felt like such a badass afterwards, because I was like 'I was in a scary movie but now I know they're fake and I can watch whatever I want.' And then right after the premiere I watched *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and that wasn't a very good idea. I'm scared of chainsaws now.

That's a reasonable fear. They're very dangerous.

But I guess if I rewatched it I wouldn't be as scared.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO - PHOTOS BY ELIZA MORSE

Why would you rewatch it if you don't like horror movies?

Why would I rewatch it when I could rewatch *My Best Friend's Exorcism*?

Media Training!

Thank you.

So, what scares you in real life? Besides *My Best Friend's Exorcism: The Motion Picture*?

When I was little, I was always scared of the dark and what could exist in it. Like something watching me and I can't see it, but it can see me. That always freaked me out.

It wasn't just the dark, it was something *in* the dark?

Right. I'm not scared of being alone, I'm not scared of darkness, I'm scared of something in the dark.

I used to have a nightmare as a kid that I'd wake up and someone would be sitting in the corner of my room watching me sleep. Just sitting there and watching me.

When I was 6 or 7, I woke up one night and something was just sitting on the end of my bed, humming and swinging its legs. It had yellow eyes.

Do you remember what it was humming?

One of those nursery rhymes like 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' or something like that. Ugh, I've got goosebumps.

What happened next?

I watched it for a while and it slowly faded away and eventually wasn't there anymore.

But that's the only thing that ever happened to you?

No, I've lived in a few haunted houses.

Get out!

I haven't seen that one. But we lived in this one haunted house in Virginia. This happened when I was a baby, but I've heard the story. My mom was sitting on the couch, a little two-seater, and it started levitating. It raised one corner, and then the whole thing came up and floated for a moment and then suddenly dropped. My mom doesn't like to talk about it.

Anything else?

There was this Spongebob Squarepants balloon and it started floating around on its own. It would come down to the level of our faces and follow us around the house.

How long did that go on?

30 minutes. For 30 minutes the Spongebob balloon haunted us.

How'd you handle it?

My brother popped it and it didn't mess with us anymore after that.

Things sitting on the end of your bed, levitating furniture, battling possessed balloons are all things you take in stride, but is there something you're not going to mess with?

Ouija boards. I've never touched one except when I've had to use it as a prop in a movie. I remember a neighborhood kid telling me their brother or their uncle played with one once and became possessed and killed his entire family, and I was like 'no, I don't want to do that.'

You don't want to murder your entire family?

I feel like getting possessed and murdering my entire family would make me extremely sad.

But you've had to use ouija boards professionally? Is it one of the hazards of your workplace?

My Best Friend's Exorcism is the only time I've used one. I've been sent scripts before where characters played with them and I've always said no because I don't want to get possessed, but with this script I felt like I could handle it. I really wanted to play this character.

I want to apologize in advance if you wind up murdering your family.

Just know it wasn't me.
It wasn't Amiah. 💀

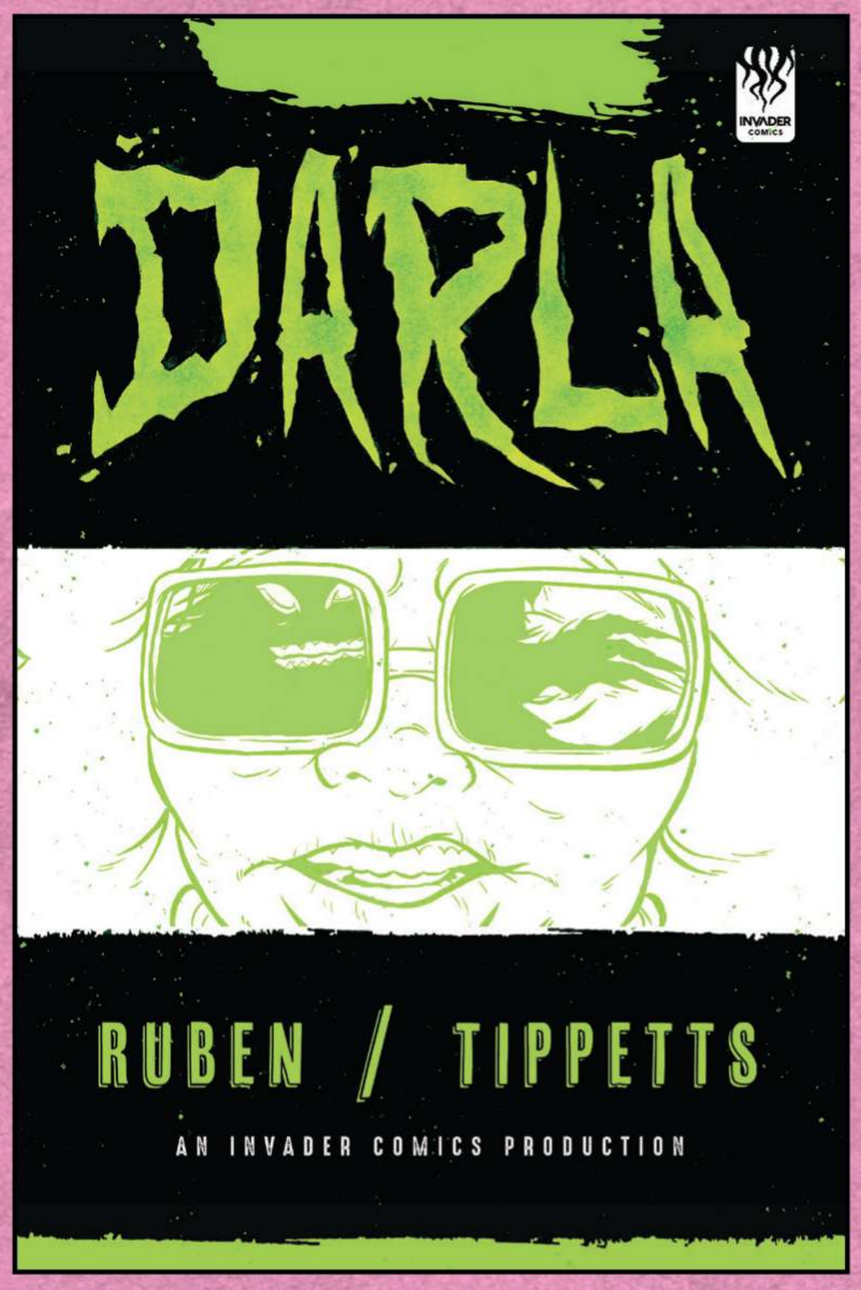
This interview has been edited for length and hilarity.

CHRISTIAN (CHRISTOPHER LOWELL) BRINGS A BIBLE TO A DEMON FIGHT.

FIRST LOOK: DARLA

A SNEAK PEEK AT THE NEW COMIC FROM JOSH RUBEN (WEREWOLVES WITHIN) AND BRI TIPPETTS

Josh here! I've been dying to work with Briana Tippetts. Her art is formidable, her style screams off the page, and her love of horror runs deep. Earlier this year, I presented Bri with a twisted story I thought might work as a graphic novel. The result is DARLA, the darkly comic tale of an irritable small-town woman who descends into madness after an accident leaves her obsessing over a local politician and hallucinating a *Babadook*-ian monster. Think of it as an homage to old *Tales from the Crypt* episodes, or a yarn outta Stephen King's Derry. Enjoy this peek at Bri's process, and keep an eye out for DARLA, coming in 2023 from Invader Comics!



(Left) An exclusive peek at our cover, courtesy of our partners at Invader.

(Right) Bri's mock-up of Darla's estranged, one-eyed daughter, Dallas.

Bri here! My process begins with sketching reference photos that I find helpful for my characters. These are from Josh's visual deck. Can you spot refs from *Prisoners*, *House Of The Devil*, *Shutter Island* and *Requiem For A Dream*?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRI TIPPETTS

I create pages in sets of 5-7 at a time, which takes about 2-3 days on average. These are original character designs for Darla and her schlubby husband Joe, a match made in Hell!

As a massive EC Comics fan, I couldn't resist drawing some rubber monster mask advertisements… (see 'em floating around Darla and Joe?)

FIX IT..

Here's a peek at some of the original creature designs, created using ink and pencil. Careful not to stare too long!

TRAVIS STEVENS' NEW FEATURE LEAVES REALITY BEHIND FOR SOMETHING MUCH MORE COMPELLING - AND HORRIFYING.

A WOUNDED FAWN

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD

It seems like a getaway with plenty of romantic promise: The charming, sophisticated Bruce (Josh Ruben) drives Meredith (Sarah Lind), who's getting back into the dating pool after recovering from a bad relationship, from New York City to his art-adorned vacation home in New Jersey. Of course, since we're watching a horror film, we know that a trip to a house in the woods can't possibly come to a good end. But *A Wounded Fawn* doesn't proceed in the manner of your typical isolated-locale fright fare, instead heading into hallucinatory territory informed by the Greek mythological figures of the Erinyes, or the Furies—female deities who wreak vengeance upon men.

BRUCE (JOSH RUBEN) IS PUT THROUGH THE WRINGER BY THE ERINYES: MEGAERA (KATIE KUANG), TISIPHONE (SARAH LIND), AND ALECTO (MALIN BARR).

Premiering on Shudder December 2 following festival play, *A Wounded Fawn* is the third feature directed by Travis Stevens, whose previous *Girl on the Third Floor* and *Jakob's Wife* also dealt with uneasy relationships between men and women. Speaking with Fango following *Fawn*'s world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival, Stevens recalls that when he was first sent Nathan Faudree's original script, "There were so many similarities to *Girl on the Third Floor* that my starting point was, well, if I'm going to do another story like this, what can I do differently with it? I really liked the idea of the Erinyes as the antagonists, and the universe just started putting images and sounds and ideas in my head. They began popping up almost effortlessly; it wasn't an intellectual approach, it was more intuitive, and it was a lot of fun to work that way, where everything started lining up. I feel like that happened with every single one of my collaborators on the movie, whether it was the DP or the wardrobe or makeup people."

Part of the storytelling approach derived from the background of the otherworldly antagonists. "It was like, OK, we're doing a Greek myth," Stevens recalls, "so I started to think about the script in terms of a Greek play, and setting up an act structure like that. It became really fun, because often with horror films, you're so driven by plot, and by 'This needs to happen so that can happen, and I need this type of scene,' that it almost becomes engineering, rather than creative or artistic. On *A Wounded Fawn*, we had a lot more freedom, we could do whatever we wanted, and the movie could literally go in any direction we wanted."

The result begins like a straightforward getting-to-know-you story, with a bit of an uneasy feeling underlying it, then proceeds to a tense two-hander at the night-shrouded house, before things really get weird. There is indeed a stream-of-consciousness sense to the second half, with Ruben (who's also a filmmaker with credits including *Werewolves Within* and *Scare Me*) noting that his performance in that latter section required "a lot of checking in, and asking Travis about continuity. I'd ask, 'Could you set this up for me again or recontextualize this moment?' and then I would just go in and take big swings. It was Travis' job to sort of sculpt me, which was great. The whole thing was, 'How high on the meter do you want me, or how low?' That's what made it so much fun for me, and the experience was amazing; it wasn't like improvisational

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHUDDER - PHOTOS BY PETER MAMONTOFF

theater by any means, but rather a cool exercise in diving in and making choices, and then pulling it back or pushing it forward from there."

Helping matters was the fact that *A Wounded Fawn* was shot, for the most part, in sequence. "So much of the movie was at the cabin," Lind says, "so we didn't have to bounce between locations." Ruben adds, "We definitely did all the day stuff and then, 'OK, we're full nights now!'" Lind continues, "We were all nights for 25 days! That was actually easier than doing a night here and a day there, and we all became vampires and that just felt normal."

"THE UNIVERSE JUST STARTED PUTTING IMAGES AND SOUNDS AND IDEAS IN MY HEAD. THEY BEGAN POPPING UP ALMOST EFFORTLESSLY; IT WASN'T AN INTELLECTUAL APPROACH, IT WAS MORE INTUITIVE, AND IT WAS A LOT OF FUN TO WORK THAT WAY, WHERE EVERYTHING STARTED LINING UP."

Although no vampires show up in *A Wounded Fawn*, their favorite snack is a major presence in the film's latter portions, courtesy of makeup effects designer Dan Martin (*Possessor*, *Color Out of Space*) and his team. "I loved all the blood; I eat that stuff up," Ruben says. "I love prosthetics and special makeup, and used to wear a ton of it doing ridiculous Internet videos. The worst part is always the acetone alcoholic glue on your eyelids, but once the prosthetics are on, in my experience, it helps gets you to the right place, the way an outfit or shoes get some actors there."

"To me," Lind says, "the worst thing about stage blood is it's mostly glycerin, so you just get stickier and stickier throughout the night. But the *Wounded Fawn* stuff was mostly tempera paint, because Travis wanted that *giallo* blood, you know? So it smelled like kindergarten." Everyone laughs, and Ruben quips, "Like kindergarten with Tom Savini!"

Another change from the norm Stevens employed on *A Wounded Fawn* was shooting the movie on 16mm film, giving it a dense, rich, high-contrast look one doesn't often find in indie horror movies these days, which are traditionally shot digitally. Here, Stevens was inspired by director Joe Begos, who used that celluloid stock on his 2019 shocker *Bliss*.

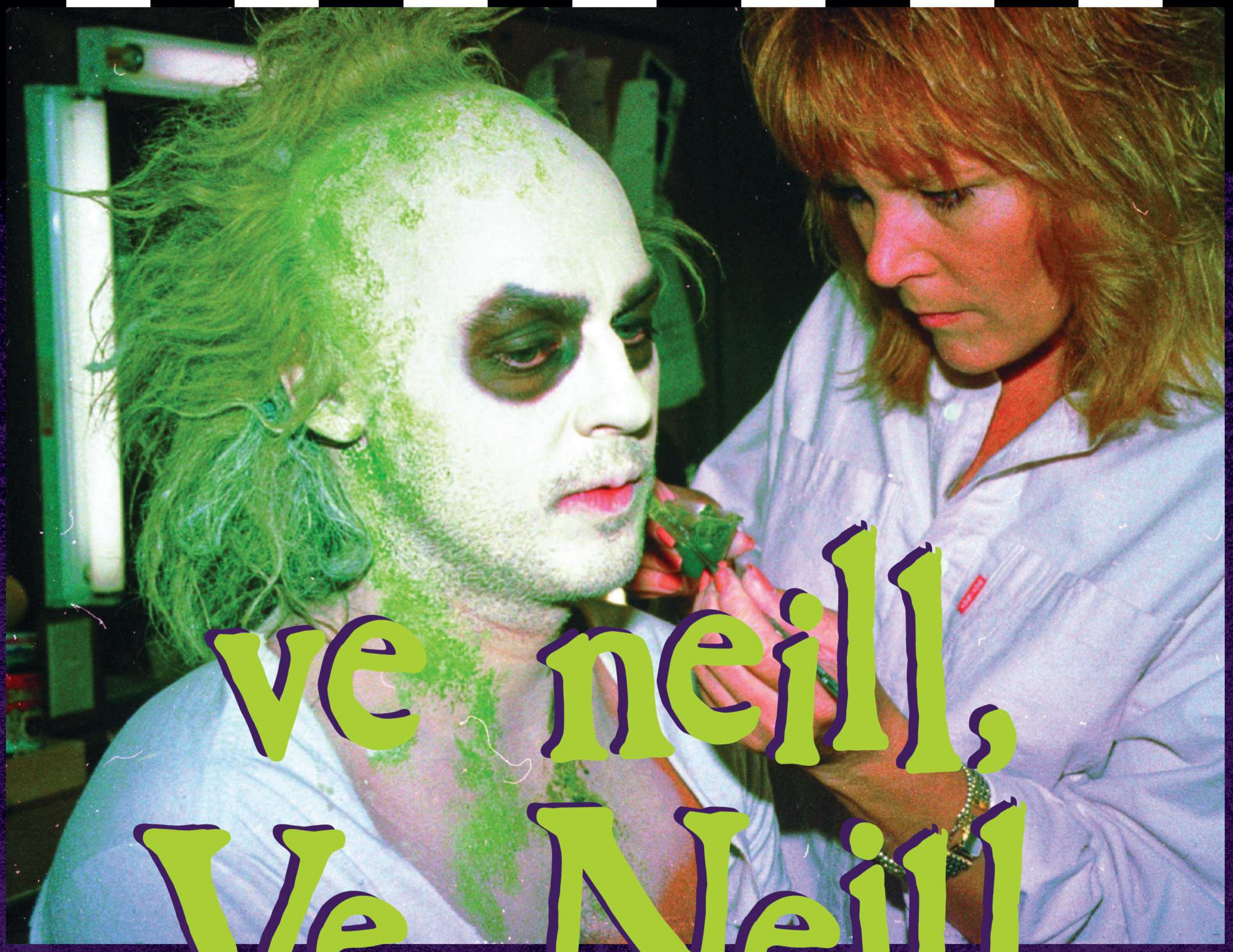
"I asked Joe, 'How did you shoot 16mm on this kind of budget?'" Stevens explains. "And he showed me how. You grow up being told, 'Oh no, you're making a low-budget movie, you can't shoot film,' but Joe showed me the calculations on how it's not that much more expensive to do it that way. Then it was a matter of seeking out a director of photography who was good creatively but also had that technical experience. And we found Ksusha Genenfeld, who had never done a feature before; I had seen one of her shorts and a couple of her experimental music videos, and it was the images in those that had me thinking this was an artist who had the technical skill. We started talking, and *Come and See* is one of her favorite films, and *Stalker*, and it was like, 'Yeah, yeah, let's do that.'

"So we went for it, and I think every single person on that set, when they heard that film going through the camera, was invested in what was happening. It's a different experience from having two digital cameras, and you're just knocking out the coverage and punching in and so forth. It was like, what we're getting right here through this one camera, and through this really terrible monitor [laughs], where you can barely see what's going on — everybody was hyper-focused. And you don't know if you got it till the film comes back."

From the subject matter to the shooting style, every element of *A Wounded Fawn* was intended to give the viewer a unique experience within the genre, and Ruben wholeheartedly believes they succeeded. "It's so fresh," he says. "It is an expected location setup and scenario for a horror film, but there is so much unexpected that happens within that framework, and it never lets you sit still. All the expectations are subverted in an extremely new and different way. They always say movies should be loud and make an impression, and this is not one that will get lost, and that's why I'm so proud of it." 💀

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHUDDER - PHOTOS BY PETER MAMONTOFF

TRAVIS STEVENS AND CREW CAPTURE A TENSE MOMENT BETWEEN MEREDITH (SARAH LIND) AND RUBEN'S MENACING BRUCE.



VE NEILL, VE. NEILL

BY LEE JOYNER

With the help of Legends Makeup Academy co-founder Lee Joyner, we've conjured the industry pioneer to discuss her transformative work in Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice*.

Old-school Fango readers need no introduction to Ve Neill; the Oscar-winning makeup artist's work has graced these pages for over 35 years, in films such as *The Lost Boys*, ***Batman Returns***, and ***Edward Scissorhands***, to name just a few. We covered her amazing career last year in FANGORIA v2, #10, and we've now invited Ve to have a recurring space in the magazine. The artist will get into the details of her and others' iconic makeup work, sharing memories, insight and rare photos.

We're kicking things off with the ghost with the most - ***Beetlejuice***.

How did you first become involved with the film *Beetlejuice*?

I was working on the film *Lost Boys* when the production designer Bo Welch approached me and said, 'Ve, I just got a script to do this really cool film called *Beetlejuice*, and I think it's right up your alley. You should call them and go in to talk to them.' So, in my infinite wisdom, I asked who the UPM [unit production manager] was. Come to find out, it was Richard Hashimoto. It just so happened that I had worked with Richard on the film *9 to 5* back in 1980. I am a firm believer in the term 'the squeaky wheel [gets the grease],' so I called Richard repeatedly. The first several times, it was too soon. So, I kept calling until he said, 'Ok, I got you an interview with our director Tim Burton.'

I remember the day I walked into the production trailer. Wow, it was an old, funky trailer on the lot at Culver City Studios. Boy, they weren't kidding when they said it was low-budget. There was a cork board up on the wall outside of Tim's office, and on it were several sketches of what appeared to be a homeless guy who wasn't in very good shape. I thought, 'God, is that him? Well, ok then.' Upon entering Tim's office, which was about the size of my closet, I had to chuckle to myself. I guess I didn't really know what to expect. I was told he was a bit quirky but I didn't really know what that meant, exactly. He was wearing a wrinkled white shirt and his hair was sticking out everywhere like a mad scientist. It was awesome. My first thought was, 'This is going to be fun!'

I knew from that day on that I wanted to work with this director. He was creative, imaginative, funny and one of the most talented artists and filmmakers I've ever worked with. My collaboration with Tim lasted for 21 years and seven films. I would come out of retirement if he called and asked me to.

How did the characters evolve in terms of coloration, and the looks for the ghosts?

We talked about what [Burton] wanted the characters to look like, and he asked for my input, as well. He wanted the characters in the afterlife to be sort of pastel-colored. I asked him, 'Kind of like Necco wafers?' He laughed and said, 'Yeah, like that."

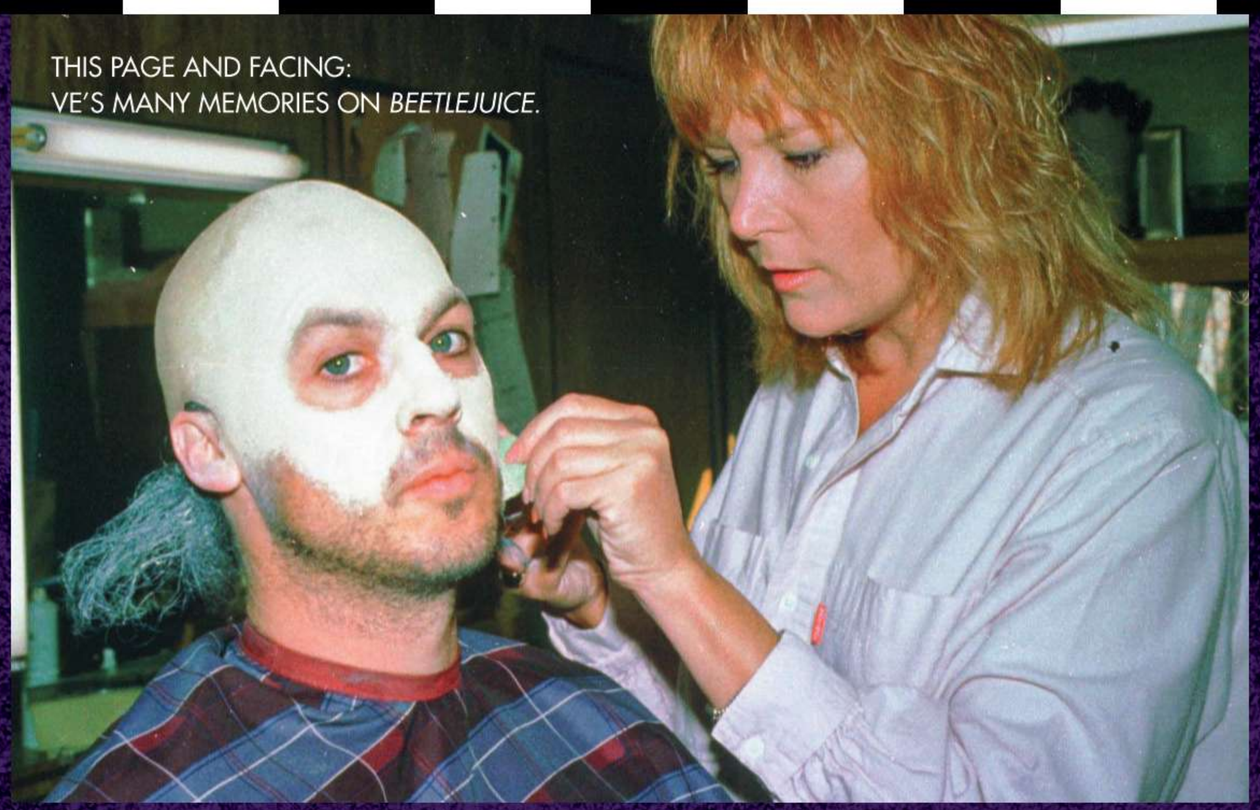
We found that after testing the looks, it was better to go with more vibrant colors because of the color-ation on the sets. Steve LaPorte was my second on the film and he also did *The Lost Boys* with me, and we worked really well together. While working on *Spaceballs*, Steve ran across an airbrush makeup that Ben Nye found that had just come out from a company called Airmist. I think this film may be the first film to use airbrushed makeup this extensively. It was very pigmented and worked perfectly for what we wanted to create. Robert Short had been hired on to do all the prosthetics as well as build the FX set pieces like the carousel hat and the snake for the stair rail. Some of the artists that worked for Robert in his shop came on to apply the prosthetics along with the artists I hired, Eddie Henriques and Margaret Bessera-Prentice. Needless to say, it was a collaborative effort comprised of many artists.

Describe the evolution of Beetlejuice's look.

I asked Tim about the sketches I had seen on my way in, and he said they were a rough idea for the main ghost, Beetlejuice. He wasn't quite sure how he wanted him so when the time came to start tests on Michael [Keaton], I used the sketches as a guideline. The first couple of tests didn't really work because, first, he didn't really look like some of the other characters in the afterlife. We wanted him to be different, but he still had to fit it to that world. After a couple of passes I asked Tim if I could just do what I wanted and he said yes.

I always knew I wanted the character to look like he had crawled out from under a rock. I had a PA go to a hobby store and get us some crushed foam in three different colors and tex-tures, as well as some moss. Michael

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VE NEILL



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VE'S MANY MEMORIES ON *BEETLEJUICE*.

also didn't want to be recognizable and asked if we could give him a broken nose. They wouldn't give us any more money to do anything, so Steve had two swollen lip appliances that we retrofitted on either side of Michael's nose to make it appear broken. Steve also took a cast of Michael's teeth and made him a set of dentures. All the other characters were very colorful, but Tim wanted Michael pale with darkened eyes. I didn't really want him to look like a vampire, so I gave him dark purplish circles with pale yellow skin which almost appeared white. I then added the bright green moss effect coming out from under his hair line and collar. I also talked Michael into letting my nail tech put false nails on him for the duration of shooting so he wouldn't have to deal with false nails popping off all the time. His character was quite active and that would have been disastrous. His wig was made by Renate Leuschner, who at the time was one of Hollywood's premier wig makers. (She has sadly passed recently.) Yolanda Toussieng was our hair stylist for the film. she dyed that wig about five times before we got it to the weird color we wanted. It wound up being a pale yellow base with pale green tips that looks like it had dirt in it. We thought for sure it was going to fall apart from all the torture it was put through.

You also have to remember that Michael only worked about two and a half weeks on the film. He was only seen twice with the living so it was easy enough to keep his shooting days contained.

Any funny stories from the set?

Just the bloopers that we'll never get to see. During the dinner scene alone, need I say more. I remember being on the other side of the swinging kitchen door with Yolanda. We were laughing so hard I thought for sure we would get busted. Everyone had a hard time keeping it together during that scene. Then there was the scene where Beetlejuice comes out of the floor with the carousel on his head. Oh my God, the stuff that came out of Michael's mouth was just hysterical, especially when he knew the hat wasn't working and he could say whatever he wanted because they couldn't use the take. I truly think Michael had a blast being that character. He could just let loose and go crazy. Much of his dialogue was ad-libbed, so it made for a fun time for all of us.

Where was *Beetlejuice* shot?

We shot most of the film at Culver City Studios, and the exterior of the Maitland house, the school and the bridge where the Maitlands had their demise were all shot in a small town in Vermont called East Corinth.

Any other fond memories from the film?

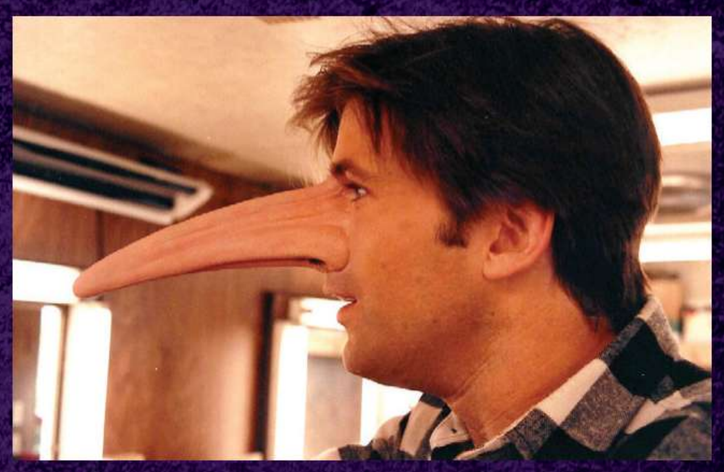
I am just happy to have been a part of such an iconic film. How many people can go to an amusement park, convention or any Halloween party, for that matter, and see one of their creations walking around? It's been 35 years and Beetlejuice is still one of the most popular characters for people to reimagine or cosplay. By the way, Steve and I will be recreating that makeup at Son of Monsterpalooza in October.

Have you ever run into any of the cast from *Beetlejuice* on other projects?

Yes, in fact I worked with Michael again on *Batman Returns*, and with Winona [Ryder] on *Edward Scissorhands*. I also worked with Jeffrey [Jones] on *Ed Wood*. I ran into Alec Baldwin when I was filming *The Love Guru* with Mike Myers. He was a guest star in a scene. I stayed friends with Glenn Shadix but he has passed, as well, and I have spoken with Catherine [O'Hara] several times over the years.

Any *Beetlejuice* fun facts to share?

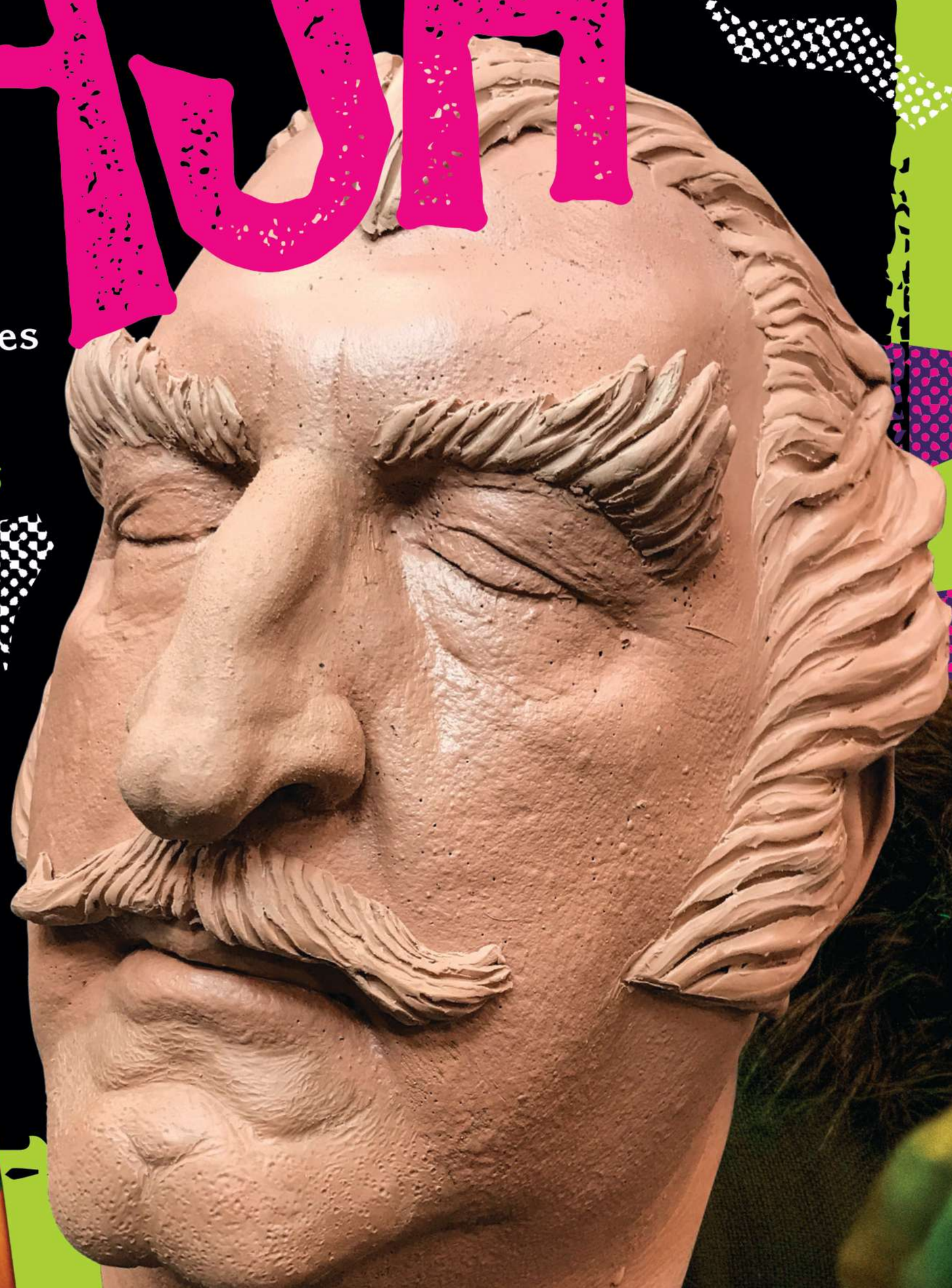
When the film was wrapping up and they were tearing down the Beetlejuice graveyard, Steve and I went dumpster diving and saved some of the tombstones and the Beetlejuice coffin lid that they had so unceremoniously chucked in the trash. Another item that came into my possession was the cowhide couch from the Deitz's house. I had these items for many years. 💀



BY HEATHER WIXSON

MUNSTER MASH

FX Legend Wayne Toth Discusses Taking on Iconic Characters, Classic Monsters and More for Rob Zombie's *THE MUNSTERS*



While many horror fans may know that special effects legend Wayne Toth has been working with Rob Zombie ever since the rocker-turned-director embarked on his first feature film project, *House of 1,000 Corpses*, their collaborative relationship actually began earlier than that, back when he recreated the robot from *The Phantom Creeps* for the back cover of Zombie's *Hellbilly Deluxe* album.

So when it came time for Zombie to embark on *The Munsters*, it was a no-brainer that Toth would be brought back to help bring his friend's vision to life. According to Wayne, getting to make a Munsters movie was something Zombie had been talking about for as long as he'd known him, and the effects maestro was both thrilled and honored to handle the design work on iconic characters like Lily and Herman Munster, Grandpa Munster (called "The Count" here), and a variety of other notable characters, as were his team members, Brian Rae and Chris Zega.

"Doing *The Munsters* was his dream project, and it couldn't have been done by anyone that has more of a love for the original show," Toth says. "I'm sure that'll come through in the movie because it's just like a playground. He's not there to change everything completely, but you get to work with the original characters and do your own thing with them. So how much more fun could that be?

"It was the same with the makeup, too. It wasn't like we were slavishly devoted to trying to duplicate everyone from the series. We weren't trying to make Jeff [Daniel Phillips] look like Fred Gwynne or anything like that; we just wanted to let the actors have fun and make their own version of these characters," Toth enthuses. "To me, it's almost along the lines of when Rob did his first *Halloween* remake and we were doing Michael Myers, where you're dealing with these iconic characters that you get to reimagine."

Nevertheless, it was a job Toth approached with reverence. "It's a scary proposition; they're so ingrained in people's minds, everything is going to be scrutinized because everyone has such a love for the original characters. That's what makes it a little daunting. But, at the same time, it also makes it exciting, because you just try to find the heart of the characters and bring that to life."

In this new iteration of *The Munsters*, we meet Lily and Herman prior to their arrival at 1313 Mockingbird Lane; indeed, we are introduced to the iconic characters back when they were still living in Transylvania. Having the story set prior to the time frame of the '60s sitcom meant that Toth and his team got to have a bit of fun with the design of the main characters.

"Herman is a Frankenstein in the style of how they've done Frankenstein for years. It was all pretty straightforward with Herman, but with The Count [Daniel Roebuck], we played around with his character a little bit more. It was Rob's decision to add the mustache, which I questioned at first because that character doesn't have a mustache. But it wound up looking great! We decided to push things a little further with Dan Roebuck than we did with Jeff Daniel Phillips. We decided to give him a prosthetic nose, because Al Lewis' nose looked like a prosthetic in the original, and we added a chin which gave his character a little bit more of a cartoony face overall.

"We approached our characters in a way that was not very different from how they were approached in the '60s. We used foam latex appliances, which were painted opaquely. In the old days, artists

MAN-MADE MONSTERS: THE COUNT (DANIEL ROEBUCK) AND HERMAN (JEFF DANIEL PHILLIPS) GO FROM CLAY TO CAMERA.

FX PHOTOS COURTESY OF VE NEILL WAYNE TOTH - MOVIE STILLS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL 1440 ENTERTAINMENT BY JON ANGLE

would use thick grease paint and blend it onto the skin. These days, a lot of artists use silicone-based translucent appliances, with a lot of airbrushing and modern painting techniques. We could have done that to make Herman look more realistic and hyper-detailed, but it wouldn't look right at all. These characters are basically living cartoons, so you don't want to go to the point of making them hyper-realistic. So, using an old-school approach to these makeups was a no-brainer."

Like many projects of late, the pandemic proved to be a challenging experience for *The Munsters*. And for Toth, not only did it directly impact his team's creative process, but having to contend with a variety of issues (he and his wife Jackie are the proprietors of the year-round Halloweentown stores in Burbank, California) made it so that he was unable to travel to set and work directly with Zombie during the shoot.

"The pandemic messed up our timeline," Toth explains. "We were finishing designs up exactly when the pandemic started, so all of the pre-production stuff came to a halt at that point. I was only able to do one Herman makeup test on Jeff Daniel Phillips before shooting began. Lily [Sheri Moon Zombie] ended up being handled by the makeup crew in Hungary. *The Munsters* is the first time I've ever designed and built things for a movie and then put it completely in the hands of other people.

"That being said, we were still able to complete several characters. We got to work on Richard Brake, who plays Nosferatu. Richard's got an incredible face where his Nosferatu makeup was really, really simple. We just had a nose and a brow and ears and teeth and the rest is just his face. It came out great," Toth beams.

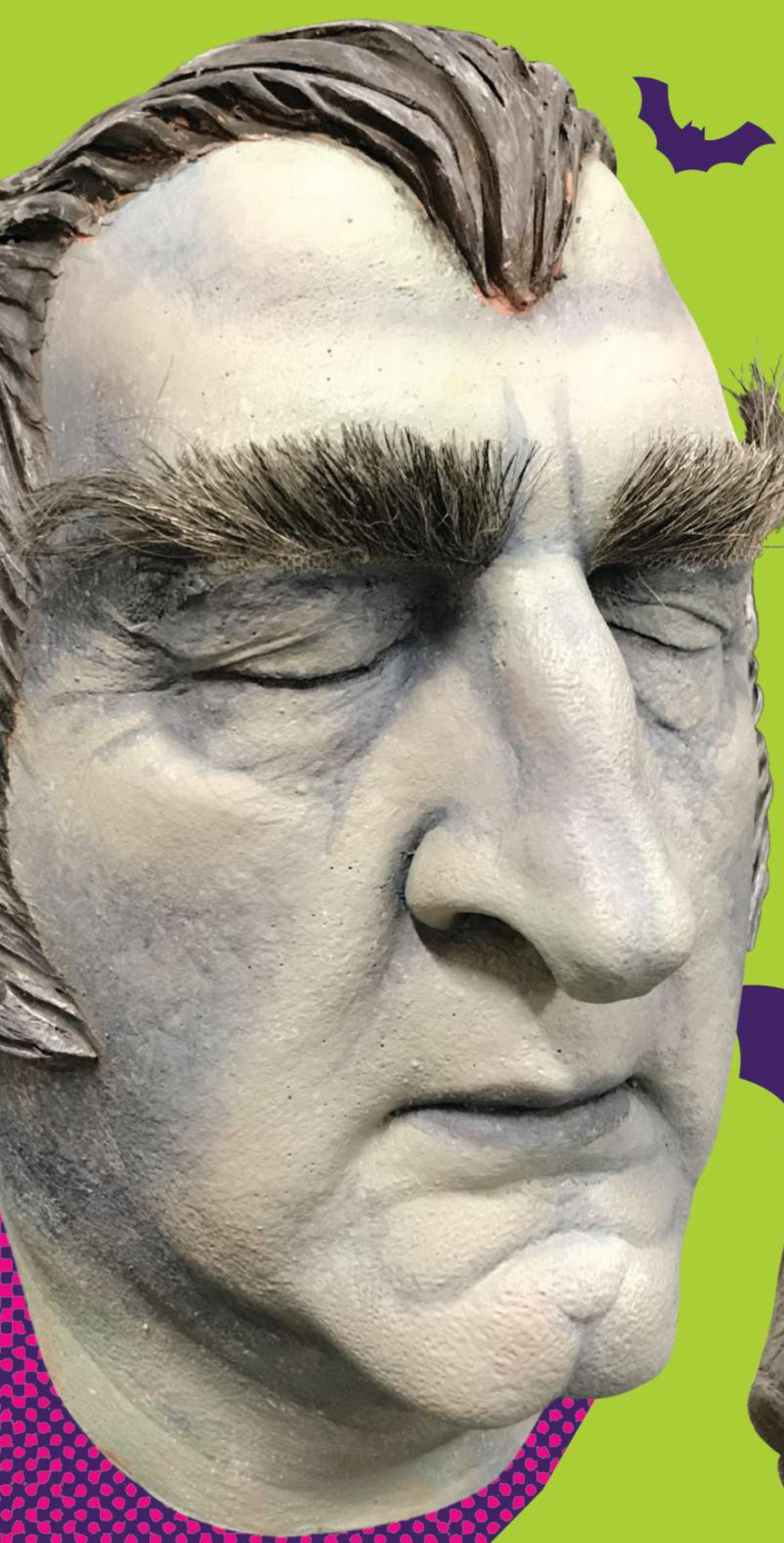
"Beyond playing Herman, Jeff also plays Zombo, who was a character from the original series that Rob really wanted to make sure he put into his *Munsters*. He has such a love for the series, so you're going to see him stick as much stuff from the original series in here as he could. We also did some zombie characters, an ape character, and we did a version of Spot as a baby since he hasn't grown up all the way yet," Wayne adds.

While the original *Munsters* was televised in black-and-white, Zombie's film embraces a vibrant color palette that runs through the film and its many characters.

"I don't think Universal would've done this new *Munsters* if Rob wanted to do it in black and white," Toth says. "So, Rob went with more of a Technicolor vibe, almost like the classic *Batman* TV show, to give it some heightened stylization, and we went with bright, oversaturated makeup colors for the characters. Even in the old versions of the in-color *Munsters* movies and specials, the colors were still muted and pale rather than super bright. I think Rob wanted to make sure this stood out in comparison."

As someone who was raised on a steady diet of classic monster movies, getting to work on this new *Munsters* was a dream come true for Toth, and gave him the opportunity to recreate so many of the characters that fueled his own fandom. "Anytime you get a chance to do something like this, it feels like you are being let loose on a playground," Toth shares.

"Hopefully, Rob's movie will breed a whole new wave of *Munsters* fans that will fall in love with monsters and start seeking out the original," Toth says. "It's pretty amazing how all these things that you loved growing up are still popular today – there's *Spider-Man*, there's *Star Wars*, and I'd include *The Munsters* in there, as well. That shows you just how timeless these characters really are."



THE COUNT, A ROCKABILLY GHOUL, AND SPOT TAKING SHAPE.

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THE HORROR OF GODZILLA

The author of the upcoming *GODZILLA: THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO THE KING OF THE MONSTERS* compiles six instances in which the King of the Monsters earned his place in the canon of fright.

By Graham Skipper

The *Godzilla* films make up history's longest-running film franchise, and the King of the Monsters is an icon of the horror genre (as evidenced by its many appearances in good ol' FANGORIA Magazine!). Many of the entries, however, are not so frightening as they are reminiscent of Saturday morning cartoons; the once-fearsome creature is often depicted as a friend of humanity, rather than foe. So what are the scariest *Godzilla* films? Here I've collected the six most frightening titles, for those times when you need your monster movies with less childlike wonder and more wanton destruction and dread.

GOJIRA (1954)

It goes without saying that the film that started it all is pure horror. It's a sobering, nihilistic rumination on nuclear weapons and the incredible power that humans wield when perhaps they shouldn't. The scenes of destruction, orchestrated less than ten years after atomic bombs decimated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would have immediately brought Japanese viewers back to that very recent, nightmarish memory. The scene where a mother tearfully tells her children that they will soon see their father in Heaven is devastating, and underscores the deep tragedy for which Godzilla is a potent metaphor.

TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA (1975)

Original *Gojira* director Ishirō Honda returned to helm one last Godzilla film in this, the final entry of the Showa Era. A mad scientist has teamed up with the aliens that built Mechagodzilla in an insane attempt to watch the world burn, aided by his teenage daughter. In a shocking twist, however, we discover that his daughter is really an android, created by the scientist when he accidentally murdered his own child in an experiment gone wrong! It was a dark and frightening end to the otherwise family-friendly Showa Era, and a fitting bookend to Honda's own nightmarish original.

GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE (1989)

The 1980s saw an emerging technology in biochemistry and genetics, and this Heisei Era *Godzilla* film uses that as a springboard for an unforgettable glimpse at what happens when man tries to play God. The titular Biollante is a hybrid creature made from the DNA of Godzilla, a young girl tragically killed in an accident, and a rose, but this rose is far from a symbol of love. At the time it was the largest kaiju Godzilla had yet faced, a fang-filled monstrosity with living tentacles and acidic spray. Combined with a tense spy-thriller human plot and rooted in a mad scientist's tragic backstory, *Godzilla vs. Biollante* is a criminally underseen but unforgettably scary entry in the Godzilla franchise.

GODZILLA VS. DESTOROYAH (1995)

Billed as "the death of Godzilla," this final entry of the Heisei Era sees Godzilla on the verge of a world-ending nuclear meltdown. To make matters worse, the Oxygen Destroyer from the original 1954 film has evolved into a number of mutant beasts that resemble a cross between the xenomorph and a scorpion. In fact, a large sequence in this film feels straight out of Cameron's *Aliens*, with a team of soldiers under siege by a group of these monsters. Eventually, the creatures evolve to become Destoroyah, the largest monster Godzilla ever faced, a frightening, winged, Chernabog-like demon creature with pure malice flowing through its veins.

GODZILLA VS. MEGAGUIRUS (2000)

Another underseen gem, *Godzilla vs. Megaguirus* sees a wormhole open near Earth, through which a huge prehistoric dragonfly deposits an egg sack that finds its way to the sewers of Tokyo. There, the eggs hatch and hundreds of baby Meganulas - ugly insectoid monsters - begin to take over the city in apocalyptic swarms. Eventually one giant larva molts, birthing the queen of the insects, Megaguirus, with one of the scariest designs of any monster Godzilla has ever faced. If you find movies like *Squirm*, *Them*, or *Arachnophobia* hard to handle, then this may be the movie for you.

GODZILLA, MOTHRA AND KING GHIDORAH: GIANT MONSTERS ALL-OUT ATTACK (2001)

In this Millennium Era film, Godzilla is brought back as a manifestation of the anger and pain of those killed during World War II. Godzilla is terrifying here, with eyes of pure white and a permanent, rage-filled snarl on its face. The souls of the dead aim to destroy a world ungrateful for their sacrifice, and Godzilla proves to be the perfect vessel for their vengeance. This film has easily the most purely horrifying Godzilla, and it makes the King of the Monsters the villain once again, harkening back to Godzilla's horror origins in a profound and effective way. 💀

For more of a deep dive into each of the films in the *Godzilla* franchise, check out Graham's book *GODZILLA: THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO THE KING OF THE MONSTERS*, out September 20 via Toho Studios and Welbeck Publishing.

NOAH SEGAN: DAD AND LOVING IT

THE GENRE VETERAN MAKES HIS DIRECTORIAL DEBUT WITH *BLOOD RELATIVES*, A VAMPIRE/ROAD TRIP/HORROR COMEDY FED BY HIS OWN REAL-LIFE PIVOT TO FATHERHOOD.

BY SCOTT WAMPLER

For years now, actor Noah Segan has been a genre-film mainstay, popping up to deliver eye-catching performances in films like *Knives Out*, *Deadgirl*, *Starry Eyes*, and *Looper*, but this year he's jumping in the director's chair for his very first directorial effort, *Blood Relatives*. The film, a road trip movie involving a vampire named Francis, his newfound daughter Jane, and one extremely badass car, sounds like a full-on blast. We talked to him on the set of the film back in December, and he had much to say about the films that inspired *Blood Relatives* (whose screenplay he also wrote), becoming a father, and why vampires speak to him on such an existential level.

FANGORIA: People I've met on set have described *Blood Relatives* as "*Paper Moon* with Vampires," which certainly got my attention.

Noah Segan: Well, I wanted to make a vampire movie about family, and *Paper Moon* is one of the great family movies. I also wanted to make a road trip movie, something that's a little bit *Little Miss Sunshine*, a little bit *Logan*. The *Paper Moon* element comes in via the dynamic between the father and the daughter. And of course, *Paper Moon*'s a funny movie, and there's a fair amount of comedy in *Blood Relatives*.

I noticed the car, obviously. It's a looker.

It's a 1969 Barracuda Fastback, with a 318 – the slapstick automatic. And we're going to get a lot of shit for that, because in the movie we call it a 383, which is a rarer model.

I gather it's very important to the character you're playing.

The Barracuda in the movie very much represents what it means to me in real life, which is 'I am a cool guy.' But, of course, the joke is that anybody who drives a joke, 50-year-old muscle car around town thinking they're a cool guy probably isn't.

So you're taking the piss out of yourself a bit here, then?

There might be a little bit of arrested development happening [with my character], a lack of self-awareness. This is me taking a very hard look in the mirror, so to speak. I'm thinking about how, when my wife and I moved in together, she moved into *my* place, and I had a real existential crisis because suddenly I was sharing that space. Obviously you have to make it comfortable for the person you're with, which meant that I had to clean out my leather jacket closet.

You had a leather jacket closet?

Yeah.

It's funny you mention that, because when I first saw you in the car, the first place my brain went was Nic Cage's jacket in *Wild at Heart*. As in, it feels totemic in some way for your character.

Yes, it is. Absolutely. It's a totem for my personal character and the character in the movie. It's also an anachronism, right? The car itself is something of a vampire. It's this thing that's runs on the blood of the earth – oil, gasoline. It's a thing that doesn't belong, and it *only* belongs because it says something about who we are when we're young, when we're single, and when we have no responsibilities. At that age you get to create all this bullshit that we think is us. Our cool jacket, our cool car, our cool vampire shit, our cool job, whatever it is. And then all of a sudden, maybe you actually start a real life and land a partner, have a family and some new responsibilities, and now all that stuff's a joke. That's kind of what the movie's about.

You mentioned the idea of arrested development. That tracks, given that you're playing an ageless vampire. Is Francis locked into the maturity level he was at when he got turned?

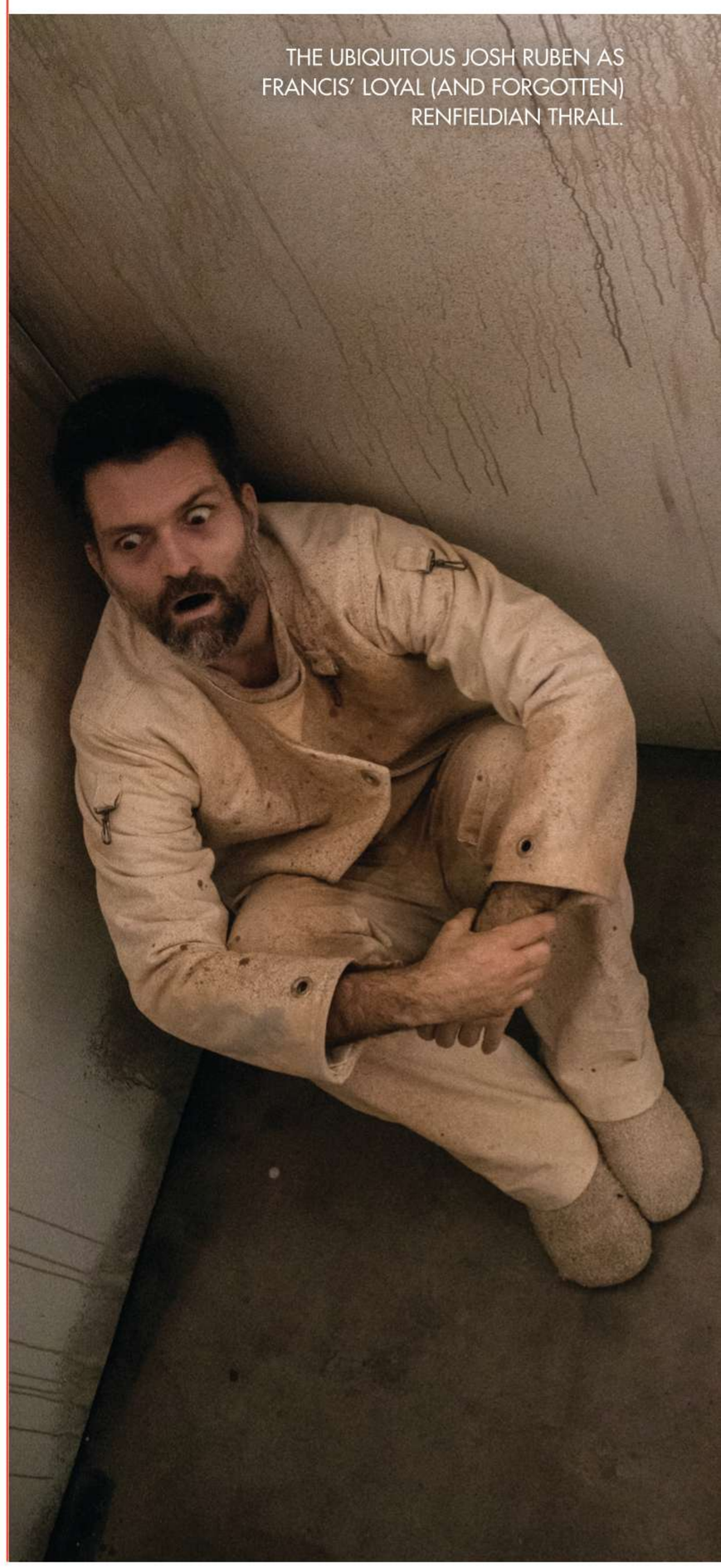
At one point, another character jokingly calls him the Fonz and says he's basically doing *Grease* cosplay. I think this guy very much believes that is the epitome of cool, though. He thinks it's very cool to wear a leather jacket and ride around in a muscle car, roaming the country and occasionally eating people. He thinks he's being inconspicuous, that he's being a cool guy. Yet in reality, that's at the least very silly and at most probably a miracle that he has not been caught.

So he's a sloppy vampire.

He's *very* sloppy. But again, the beauty of movies is that [characters] can get away with a lot. Think of all the crazy shit that you get away with when you're a punk kid and you look back at it 20 years later, and you're a person who goes home and cooks dinner and pets their animal or plays with their kids. You think back, and there's this flash of, 'Oh, my God. Here's 25 ways that I could have died or killed someone, doing the most insane, stupid shit. And somehow I didn't!' That's basically how this vampire has lived his life for the last hundred years.

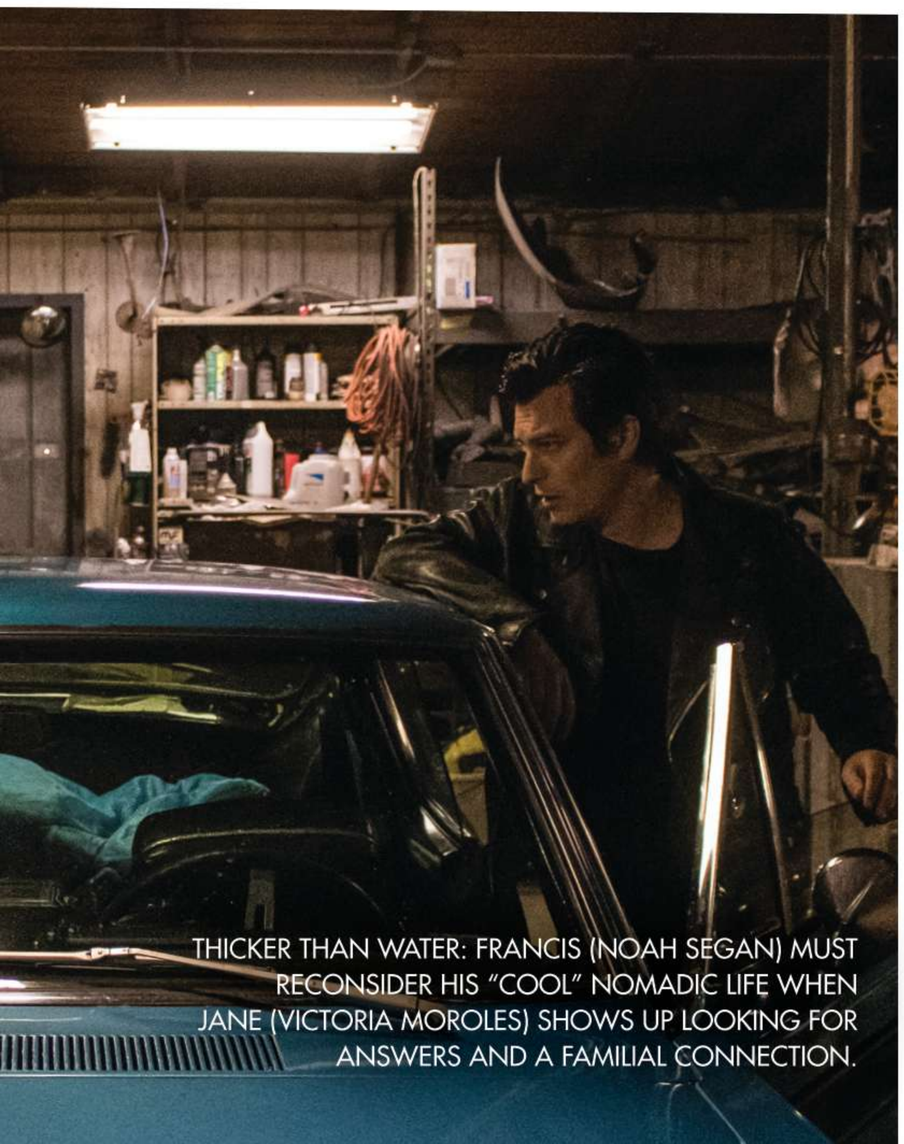
What can you tell me about Francis' daughter?

Jane (Victoria Moroles) is much smarter than her dad and has never really known him, didn't know much about him other than a few details about the night he and her mom met: the time they spent time together in



THE UBIQUITOUS JOSH RUBEN AS FRANCIS' LOYAL (AND FORGOTTEN) RENFIELDIAN THRALL.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHUDDER



THICKER THAN WATER: FRANCIS (NOAH SEGAN) MUST RECONSIDER HIS "COOL" NOMADIC LIFE WHEN JANE (VICTORIA MOROLES) SHOWS UP LOOKING FOR ANSWERS AND A FAMILIAL CONNECTION.

FAMILY DINNER: JANE SAMPLES THE LOCAL FARE ON THE ROAD.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHUDDER

the car he drove, what he looked like in his cool jacket, the music he listened to. When Jane becomes an orphan, she sets out to track this guy down, while piecing together who and what he might be and how that relates to what *she* does and *her* abilities.

So, you must be a big vampire guy.

Oh, yeah. Look, the thing I'm most concerned about is my mortality, right? I've always been like that, and the feeling's become more pronounced since I had kids. But I also think that when you work in a job where you're creating and telling stories, as a filmmaker does, you can't help but think, 'How does this reflect on me?' And in the macro sense, 'How does this reflect on my legacy?' I think that sort of mortality looms large for a lot of people who create things.

It's also the idea of the vampire as the other, as someone who operates on the edge. That's something I relate to and something we talk about in the movie a lot, just in terms of being a marginalized person. I'm a Jew, and that factors into the movie. Victoria is Latina. We have that connection to what it's like to be someone who's not like other people.

What other films were your creative touchstones here?

Number one with a bullet is *Raising Arizona*. Also *Blood Simple*, which is one of the best Texas movies ever made. Texas movie made by a bunch of Jews, I'll add. And on the vampire tip, *Ganja & Hess* is my favorite vampire movie. That one has a lot to say about 'the other,' as well, and what it's like to live in fear, questioning where and when you belong. *Near Dark* also gets a big nod, tonally.

Earlier we were talking about you having embraced fatherhood. You've clearly worked that into this film, as well.

Yeah! I love being a dad. I've always wanted to be a dad! And as a parent, you're constantly having to reevaluate who you are, because you're getting an immediate reflection of that. However you act, now there's another little person who's going to act the same way, who's going to reflect whatever your vibes are, whatever your feelings are. Part of the aim here was to sort of wrap all that around a vampire movie. We're talking about mortality again – your own mortality, your kids' mortality, the legacy you're going to leave. That's extremely *present*, which is a state vampires constantly have to live in, right? They're just trying to survive, every step of the way. 💀

By Jay Cheel × Photos by Cameron McCool

Weyes Blood

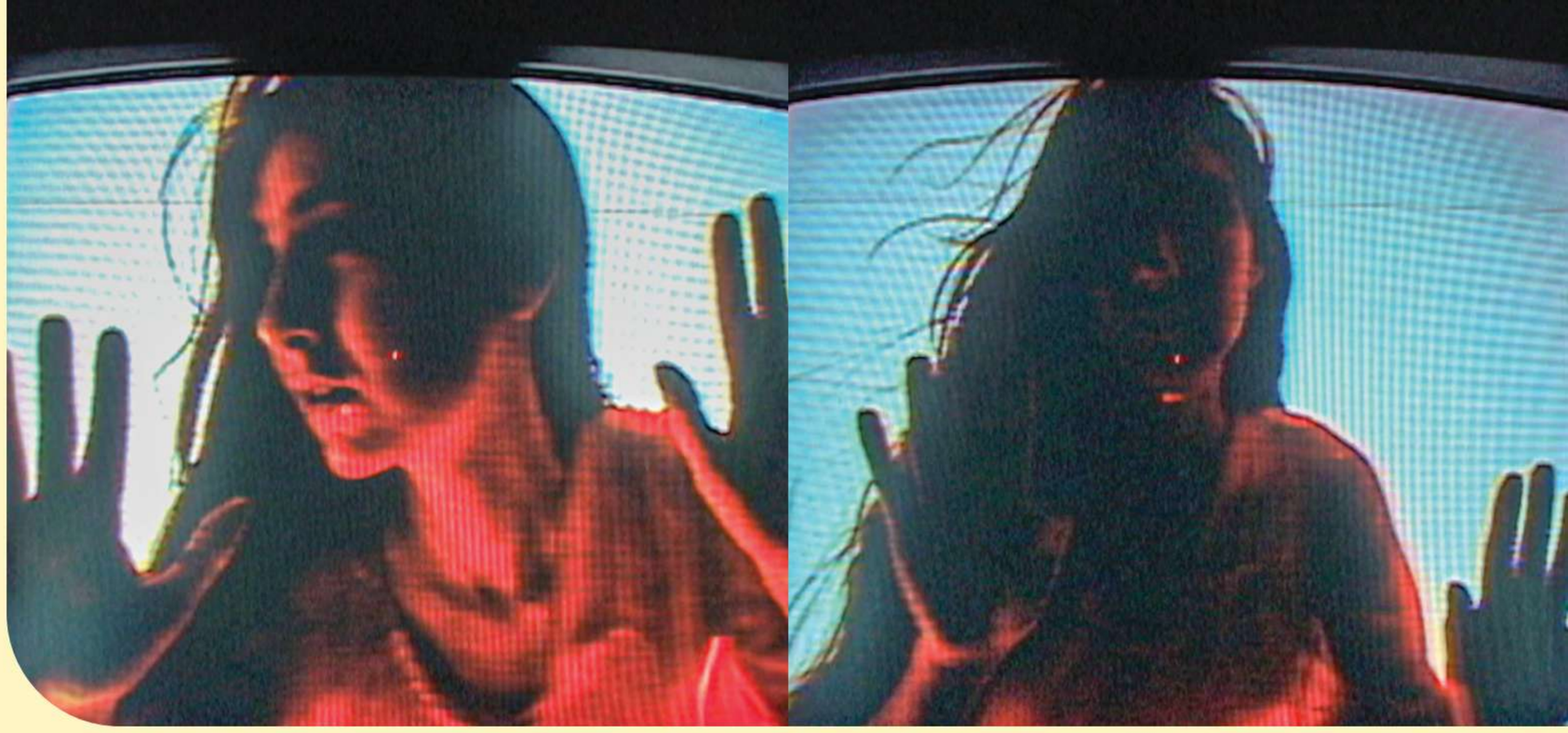
IS HERE TO SCORE YOUR NIGHTMARES

Over the past year, Weyes Blood (aka Natalie Mering) has been hard at work recording her new album, *And In The Darkness, Hearts Aglow*, the follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Titanic Rising*. You can imagine my excitement when – between writing, recording, and some touring – Natalie somehow managed to find time to write an original score for our second season of *Cursed Films*. As a self-proclaimed lover of movies, Natalie was a perfect fit for the gig: her music is lush and cinematic, working brilliantly against the images she and her collaborators have collected throughout her various music videos. One video in particular, for her track "Everyday," plays like a pastiche of slasher movie tropes, with Weyes Blood at the center of the horror story.

Clearly, Natalie has a relationship with horror, so I sat down to talk with her about the films that influenced her, sneaking horror film viewings in a religious household, and her first crack at composing.

What do you love about movies?

I think it's more of a fascination. We have no idea how great of an impact they have on our minds because they're basically the closest thing to human dreams. The fact that there was even a moment in time where people dreamt in black and white goes to show that movies have such a greater impact on our subconscious than we even realize. In a lot of ways they are manufactured dreams. The statement 'I love movies' isn't so much like 'I love movies!' It's actually more like, 'How could you *not* love movies?'



"The making of the video was also kind of like the beginning of a horror movie: my friends and I arrived at the cottage, and I wondered, 'Are we going to get murdered here?'"

So if you're thinking about movies as dreams, horror movies are obviously...

Nightmares! Horror movies are easier to get made, they're cheaper to make, and they tap into the macabre and the morbid curiosity we all have. It's like exorcising the demons, so we don't actually have to really deal with them. I always felt like I was attracted to horror films because I was raised so Christian; they were forbidden fruit to me. The smallest thing in the world would freak me out. Like, movies that weren't even supposed to be scary! I remember seeing *Backdraft* and being terrified for months!

Having grown up in a religious household, were there some secret movies you watched without your parents knowing?

Oh, yeah. I saw *The Shining* by accident. It was a TV version, too, so it was edited to not be so gruesome. I was probably like four years old. I just saw a couple of scenes, and those scenes haunted me for about eight years. Just endless terror whenever I'd see a patterned carpet. The way that it's shot was so spooky to me that I didn't even need to see the whole film to feel like I had. And then when I was 12, I was hanging out with a bunch of 16-year-olds, trying to be cool, and they're like, We're going to watch *The Shining*, and they put it on, and I just completely melted down. I couldn't even get through it because the sensory memory, just the feeling of the movie

SCENES FROM "EVERYDAY": VIDEO TRIES TO KILL THE RADIO STAR.

was too oppressive and intense for me. And then finally when I was 16, I was able to watch it in its entirety. And now I take it and it's like aspirin.

You've made a couple of music videos that were inspired by horror films. I'm thinking of your video for 'Everyday.'

That's our *Friday the 13th* homage! The song is about dating apps and people going from one to the next, which is very similar to a slasher film. Just a little commentary on how everybody tends to treat one another. Like, 'Oh, another person died a horrible death! Next!' So I wanted the deaths to feel… funny. I studied those films – the really harsh lighting, the intense POV of the killer. They were moods that were very easy to accomplish with no budget.

It also speaks to our desensitization. We're all deeply desensitized, and I wanted to make light of that. The making of the video was also kind of like the beginning of a horror movie: my friends and I arrived at the cottage, and I wondered, 'Are we going to get murdered here?'

That kind of reminds me of something we touched on in *Cursed Films*: the idea is that when you make a dark film, you might be inviting that darkness into your reality.

Yeah. Well, I will say that I think when you set out to make something dark, you are playing with fire. It's a little different than watching it, because you're literally engaging with that energy directly. You're creating that nightmare.

Speaking of *Cursed Films*, we were all really excited to have you create the original music for season two. What was that like for you?

I think scoring just comes naturally to me. When I write a song, it's almost like the lyrics are the visual component, and the music is the score to the lyrics. So if the lyrics already exist, it's pretty fast. I think in harmony, I think in melodies, so as long as I understand the sentiment, the music flows out naturally for me. For *Cursed Films*, I just painted more with feelings and intentions and didn't think the same way I do when I write songs.

When thinking about horror scores that you have enjoyed, do any images come to mind that you can't separate from the music that scored them?

Definitely *The Shining*. The bloody elevator and the twins in the hallway. Penderecki just blasting, Wendy Carlos. You cannot do that opening scene driving on that road in Colorado without that Wendy Carlos score, which is an old classical piece played with the synths. It becomes so much more ominous and iconic. *Halloween* is synonymous with the soundtrack. I think horror movies without scores are also pretty scary, but when the music itself is unsettling, it pushes you over the edge. It's the final skeleton key to unlock the fear in your mind. In Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca*, there's a theremin that's really terrifying, and that definitely sets the tone for the young bride's feelings.

What do you think horror provides for people that they aren't getting elsewhere?

I think that it's very easy, unfortunately, to get numb and comfortable in the way that we live. There's so much amusement and distraction, I think if somebody can have their attention really held on to and guided through an unsettling process, it does strangely feel like a gift. Most media is so ephemeral and just like in and out of your head. But actually sitting through a movie like *Night of the Living Dead* where barely anything is happening yet you're completely engaged and can't keep your eyes off the screen, I mean, that to me is the reward in itself. That's an escape. It can hold your attention the whole time, and exorcise the morbid curiosity that we all have in a way that is relatively safe. 💀

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS & FRIGHTENING PIPES!

IN CONVERSATION WITH STEPHEN VOLK ON 30 YEARS OF

GHOSTWATCH

BY PAUL DAVIS

Midway through the seminal BBC One special *Ghostwatch*, Michael Parkinson, one of the most beloved talk show hosts in British television history, turned to the camera and implored, *"We don't want to give anyone sleepless nights. We don't want to start a panic. Don't let your imaginations run riot!"*

Spoiler: that's exactly what happened after *Ghostwatch* aired to an unsuspecting audience on October 31st, 1992. Resulting in over 30,000 complaints lodged at the BBC minutes after its presentation, *Ghostwatch* has long since worn a badge of honor as one of the most controversial works of fiction to grace television screens.

At 11 years old I was one of those who tuned in with my family that Halloween night. Ninety minutes later I refused to sleep with the lights off. I was already a pretty hardcore horror fan, but *Ghostwatch* struck a nerve. I believed that what I was watching was completely real. I had no reason not to: it featured real BBC presenters and even welcomed viewers to call in and share ghost stories on the same telephone number used on the BBC Saturday morning kids show *Going Live!* It was terrifying.

That Monday at school, *Ghostwatch* was the "water cooler topic," with everyone talking about it. 30 years later, *Ghostwatch* is still a topic of conversation in the horror community. Despite a ten-year ban by the BBC, its eventual DVD release in 2002 sparked a renaissance that has seen the film go on to be one of the most beloved Halloween stories with fans the world over.

Among those surprised by its ongoing legacy is the movie's writer and creator Stephen Volk. Having already put my own nod to *Ghostwatch*'s malevolent spirit, Mr. Pipes, in my 2019 movie *Uncanny Annie*, I sat down with Stephen to discuss the first film to scare the bejesus out of me, and its enduring ability to find a new audience.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF 101 FILMS

At 11 years old I thought I had a pretty firm grasp on horror. But for a lack of a more reserved phrasing, watching *Ghostwatch* (*GW*) 'live' in 1992 fucking destroyed me!

When people tell me that I have to say both 'thank you very much' and 'I'm really sorry.'

I'm glad that I saw movies such as *The Exorcist* after *Ghostwatch* because it honestly opened the floodgates for me to enjoy and be scared by horror cinema, rather than just wait for the special effects.

Movies like *The Exorcist* went into the thinking of *GW*, the idea of the mother, the stranger coming to the house, the siege mentality of *Night of the Living Dead*, the terrible abuser character like Freddy Krueger, the cross-dressing elements from Norman Bates – a whole bunch of subtext going on from movieland. Yet with all of that in there, people still truly believed that what they were seeing was really happening.

THE STUDIO SEGMENTS DID AS MUCH TO SELL THE REALITY OF *GHOSTWATCH* AS THE HAUNTING SCENES, BUT (BELOW AND OPPOSITE) MIKE SMITH, SARAH GREENE AND MICHAEL PARKINSON WERE OF COURSE IN ON THE GAG.

Considering how it was treated in the wake of its initial release, does the legacy and longevity of *Ghostwatch* surprise you at all?

When you have an idea that excites you, you tend to think 'if we can pull this off correctly, then it could be something that people really remember,' and I'd be lying if I said that wasn't there for *GW*. Then it was very much buried by the BBC, and for a good ten years after both the director Lesley Manning and I felt as though *GW* had been ignored by both the BBC and the horror community. So, it was very much a downer for us until we got a call out of the blue from the British Film Institute in 2002 saying that they wanted to release it on DVD.

PEOPLE COMPLAINED 'THIS SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO BE SHOWN ON THE BBC,' AND THEN IN THE SAME SENTENCE SAY, 'BUT IT WAS VERY WELL MADE.'

I'm guessing the rise of the internet also had something to do with its cult status that grew over time...

In the 2000s internet groups were popping up, and it became this word-of-mouth thing between people who saw it when it aired and those who caught it on bootleg VHS. Then I started getting asked to speak at university screenings – which to my delight, always went well. They would laugh through the beginning, and then the entire audience goes quiet about halfway through, which is how it was planned.

You originally conceived *Ghostwatch* as a six-part mini-series, correct?

That's right. The premise followed an investigative film crew who get involved with a haunting in a tower block. There were various story strands, but the idea was that it would culminate with a live broadcast from within the haunted house in episode six.

I did a treatment which the BBC liked, but were squeamish about the idea of a six-hour supernatural drama. The producer, Ruth Baumgarten, said that there was an empty slot for a 'play of the week' type thing on BBC One, and asked if we could do it as a one-off film. I suggested we just do the last episode and portray it as if it's live. I'll never forget that moment, because Ruth looked both startled and excited in the same breath.

How early was it discussed to use actual BBC presenters such as Sir Michael Parkinson, Sarah Green, and Mike Smith?

In the first draft of the script, I labeled the characters as Anchorman, Reporter, Comedian… but it didn't read very well so in subsequent drafts I put in different names of real personalities such as David Dimbleby, Joanna Lumley, Anneka Rice. I did that to get a feel of who they might cast in these roles, but also to reinforce every time they read it that they had to be real presenters playing themselves.

Honestly, you could've had the Chuckle Brothers in it, and it still would've scared the shit out of me. It seems as though the shoot was a smooth sail?

That's down to Lesley Manning. She was the one who really pulled it all off. I did go to the set one night and the car broke down three times on the way. It was spooky, but it's very easy to get into the mindset of something trying to stop you when you're working on something supernatural.

There was a bit of rearranging done in the edit. I wanted the ghost to be plucking from the BBC archive – showing clips from *Morecambe & Wise* and *The Two Ronnies*. I wanted to fuck with the audience and give a real visual sense of the ghost in the machine, as it were.

Your original ending was slightly different, too, wasn't it?

I wanted to have Michael Parkinson turn to the audience and say, 'The ghost is in the machine! You need to switch off your TV now! He's coming into your house,' and then it cuts to black. The producers said, 'There is no way on earth we're going to do that.' The other idea that was nixed: Lesley investigated putting a tone on the soundtrack that was inaudible to humans, but dogs would hear it and go crazy in people's homes. Sadly, they couldn't figure it out technically.

I think the BBC would have had a lot more than 30,000 complaints if you guys had pulled that off.

People complained 'this shouldn't be allowed to be shown on the BBC,' and then in the same sentence say, 'but it was very well made.' The complaints weren't that they got scared by it, it was that they felt they were made fools of. People have asked me whether it would have been more suited for another channel, but I've always said that the BBC was the perfect host because it's the nation's auntie. It was there during wartime, it always tells the truth, so part of its power was to subvert that.

With recent movies such as *Host* citing *Ghostwatch* as a direct influence, where have you seen *Ghostwatch*'s fingerprint in other movies that came after it?

There's a documentary on Shudder called *The Found Footage Phenomenon*, and they interviewed Oren Peli, who said that he was influenced by *GW* in making *Paranormal Activity*. It's great that several found footage films seem to

THIS PAGE AND FACING: SCENES FROM THE INFAMOUS BROADCAST.

MR. VOLK TODAY, LOOKING BACK FONDLY.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF 101 FILMS AND STEPHEN VOLK (BOTTOM RIGHT)

have been inspired by it, but *GW* was always intended to be a take on live TV culture that brings the drama into your living room.

I see the word 'mockumentary' a lot, too, but it's really not that either.

The closest thing to it that I've seen was the *Inside No. 9* Halloween Special *Dead Line*. I'm a great admirer of all *The League of Gentlemen* and worked with Reece Shearsmith on a play that I had written. I texted him saying, 'I hear you're doing a live broadcast for Halloween. Can you put a little nod to GW in it?' And he replied with, '… I think you'll like it.' So, when it aired, I text him again saying that I did like it and he said, 'It was all for you.'

Reece is wonderful. I had the pleasure of directing him in my first short film, and a few years later we both appeared in an episode of *Doctor Who* that was written by fellow *League* member Mark Gatiss.

Mark is great fun, too. He did a radio show in which he said that Mr. Pipes was the best name for a ghost that he'd ever heard. Very flattering to say the least.

"MR. PIPES CAME FROM THE IDEA THAT IF YOU PEEL AWAY A LAYER, THERE'S AN EVEN NASTIER LAYER UNDERNEATH."

It has always reminded me of Carol Anne referring to the ghosts in *Poltergeist* as 'the TV people.'

I was watching a documentary about poltergeists, and a mother said something like 'the radiator was making noises and scaring the kids, so I called him Mr. Radiator…' not Pipes, but something akin to Pipes. I thought it was rather innocuous like Norman or Freddy, which is far more chilling in the right context. The concept that went into building the character of Pipes really came from *The Stone Tape*, and Nigel Kneale's idea that if you peel away a layer there's an even nastier layer underneath. I've always loved that, and it also lets you wrong-foot people with the reveal.

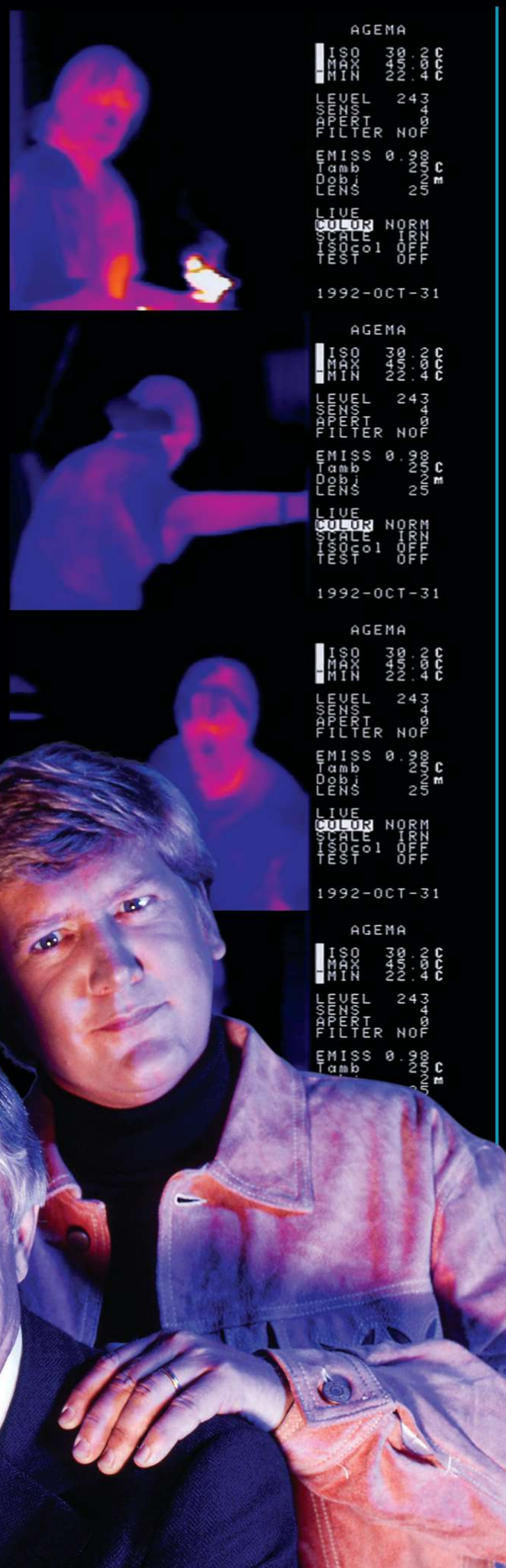
What else has been keeping you busy recently?

The effect of lockdown was quite harsh for me, not least because my mother died. TV production was completely frozen in inactivity. So I found myself drawn to writing. My book *Under a Raven's Wing* came out last year, which was about a young Sherlock Holmes meeting Poe's detective Dupin in 19th century Paris, and *Lies of Tenderness*, a wide-ranging collection of short stories, came out this year. I'm also developing a new script with Lesley Manning, the director of *GW*.

And *Ghostwatch* is finally getting a Blu-ray release packed with new extras from 101 Films this fall.

I'm glad that people still find the show scary. It hasn't really diminished and every Halloween, it's still regularly up there in the lists of 'Top 10 Things That Made Me Crap Myself.' 💀

Ghostwatch will be released on a Special Edition Blu-ray by 101 Films this year. More information at stephenvolk.net. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF 101 FILMS

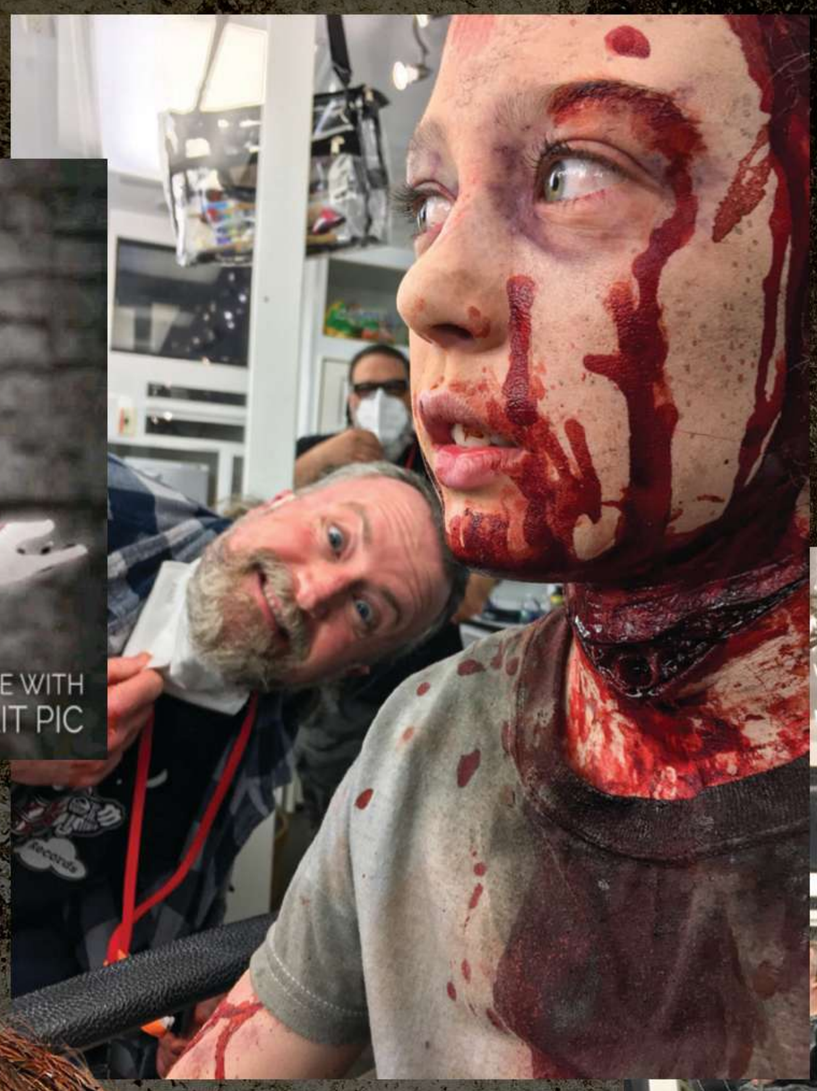
PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEARDED SKULLS MUFX GROUP / RICK POUR

SPOILERS & SPLATTER

THE BLACK PHONE

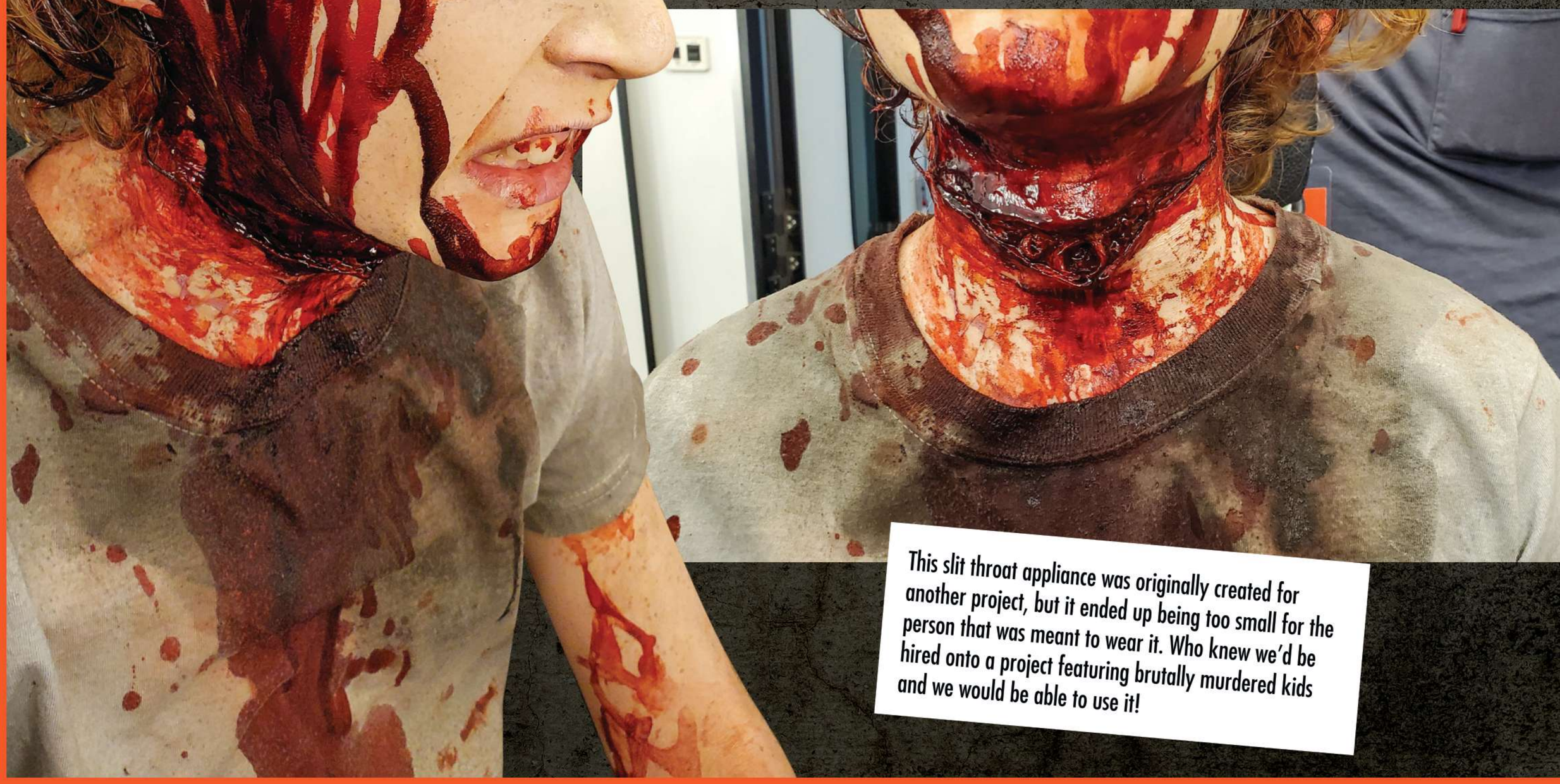
BY BEARDED SKULLS MUFX GROUP

In the script the "Ghost Kids" were depicted as shadowy figures and were going to be CGI. Thankfully, director Scott Derrickson decided to go practical. With the help of concept artist Sean Beck, we honed in on each kid's demise, giving each one their own unique look. For example, Robin (Miguel Cazarez Mora) is a fighter, so he had more defensive slashes on his arms than the others. Vance (Brady Hepner) is the badass of the bunch, so we had him painfully gutted by the Grabber to make sure he felt it.



In one of the spookier scenes, we see Griffin (Banks Repeta) floating upside down in the corner of the basement. While his death is one of the film's more gruesome, you can see everyone had a ton of fun with it.

Can't tell which is bigger: the slit in Banks Repeta's throat or the smile on his face!



This slit throat appliance was originally created for another project, but it ended up being too small for the person that was meant to wear it. Who knew we'd be hired onto a project featuring brutally murdered kids and we would be able to use it!

Robin beats the bloody snot out of Moose (J. Gaven Wilde). For some of the older readers, this fight sequence had a very *Billy Jack* vibe. (Younger readers: please seek out the movie *Billy Jack*!!)

Finney lets the Grabber know what's what! While Ethan Hawke wore the Grabber mask for much of the movie, the handful of times we got to have him in the makeup chair were truly highlights. He's an incredible conversationalist and storyteller.

The Grabber and his brother (James Ransone) bury the hatchet - or in this case, the axe. For several days of the shoot, we had to replicate the blood splatter on the Grabber's face from the axe hit. It literally was like having to duplicate a Jackson Pollock painting every day.

Oh shit! Who's watching the set?!

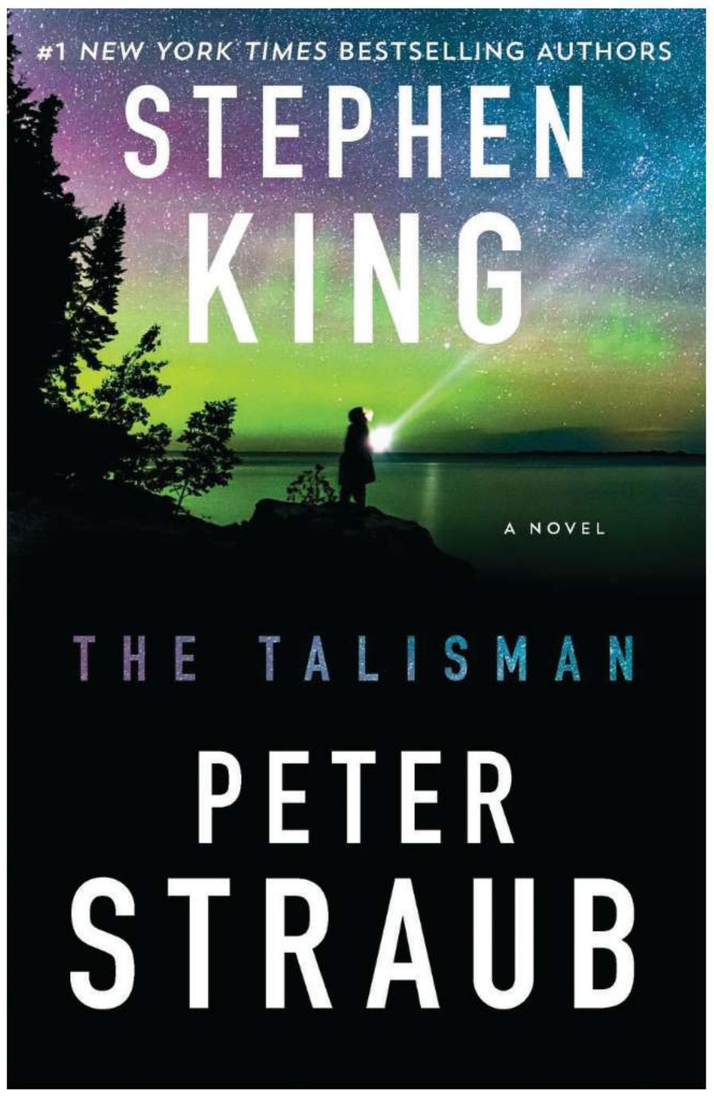
LIVING IN A STEPHEN KING FANTASY WORLD

By Scott Wampler

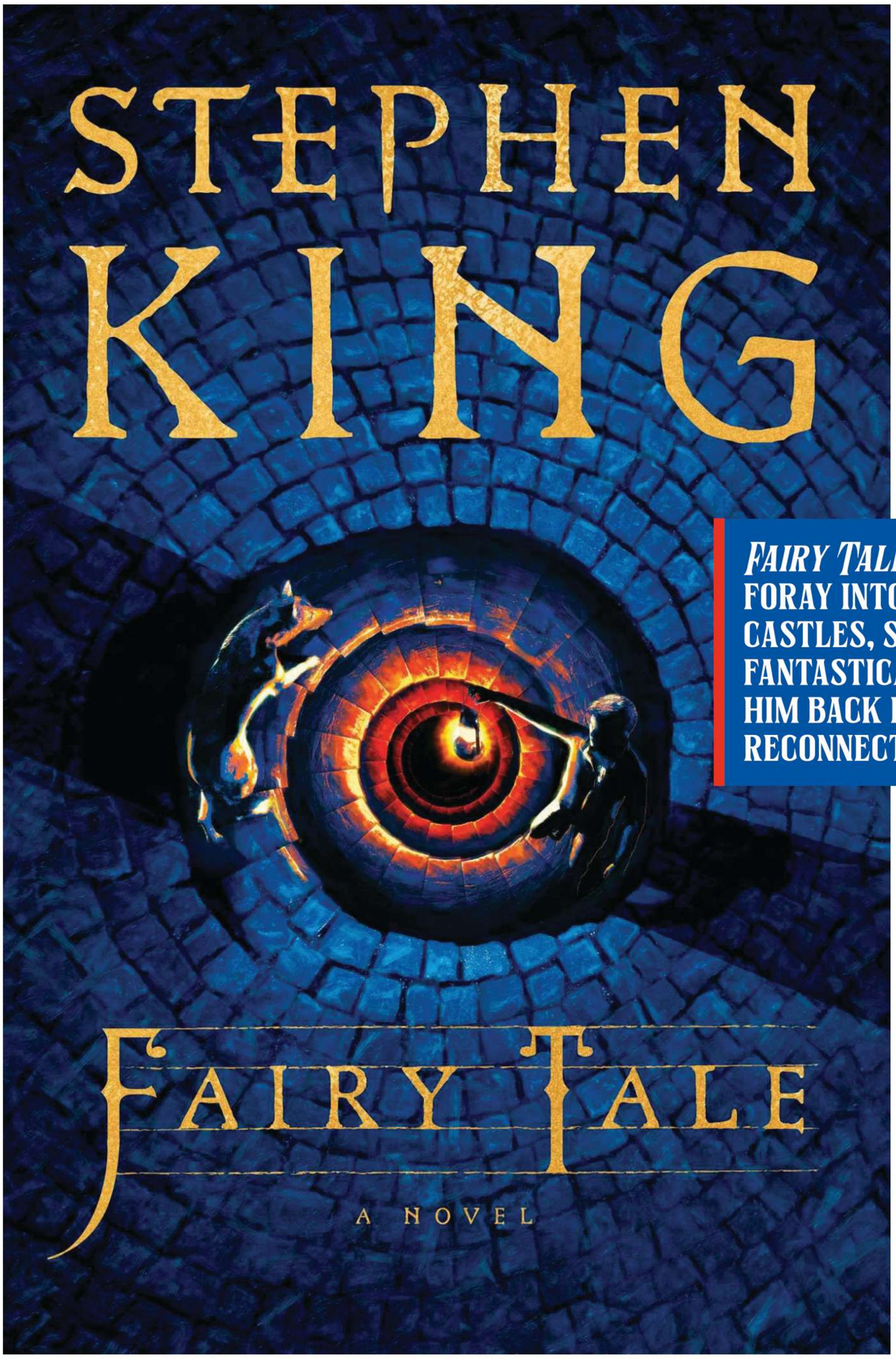
Anyone who knows anything about America's reigning "Master of Horror" can tell you that Stephen King's the guy behind God-only-knows how many terrifying short stories, novels (some of which are full-blown horror *epics*) and screenplays, but real King heads know the truth: horror may well be the most dominant flavor of the man's career, but he's capable of so much more. Mysteries, crime novels, emotionally-charged coming-of-age stories, science fiction – you name it, and chances are that King's tackled it (yes, even romance; check out the fourth book in his epic *Dark Tower* series, *Wizard & Glass*, which very nearly gives *Romeo and Juliet* a run for its money in the ol' "doomed romance" department).

On occasion, King has also dabbled in fantasy. His just-released new novel, the excellent *Fairy Tale* (which hit stores on September 2nd), represents his most recent foray into the realm of sinister castles, stark raving mad royals, and fantastical creatures, and finding him back in that territory felt like reconnecting with an old friend. Indeed, reading it has inspired me to go back and revisit some of his other works of fantasy, including two novels which rank among his very best.

The best of the bunch, in this writer's humble opinion, is also his first: 1984's *The Talisman*. Co-written with Peter Straub, the novel tells a sprawling tale involving a young boy named Jack who finds himself able to "flip" between our world and another (the so-called "Territories") that somewhat mirrors our own. In our world, Jack's mother is an alcoholic former B-movie actress slowly dying in a hotel room; here, she is a dying queen, wasting away in her resplendently-appointed chambers. To save both (and, indeed, the worlds each version inhabits), Jack will have to set out on a 600+-page adventure to obtain the titular Talisman, getting into all manner of wildly dangerous escapades along the way. *The Talisman* offers some of the same genre-mixing flavors found in King's *Dark Tower* novels, and is allegedly being turned into an ongoing Netflix series executive produced by the Duffer Brothers (*Stranger Things*) and no less than Steven Spielberg (who's held the rights to adapt this unique King novel ever since it was published). It's one helluva yarn, mandatory reading if you have even the slightest interest in King's fantasy output.



Three years later, *The Talisman* was followed by *The Eyes of The Dragon*, a novel which wears its fantastical inspirations even more explicitly. Perhaps too explicitly, it turned out, for some King die-hards at the time: while the former certainly contained its fair share of castles and creatures, it also included plenty of the horror elements both King and Straub were known for. *Eyes of The Dragon*'s borderline YA feel was something else entirely, and the backlash King received over that novel would inspire him to tackle the topic of toxic fandom in his next book, *Misery*.

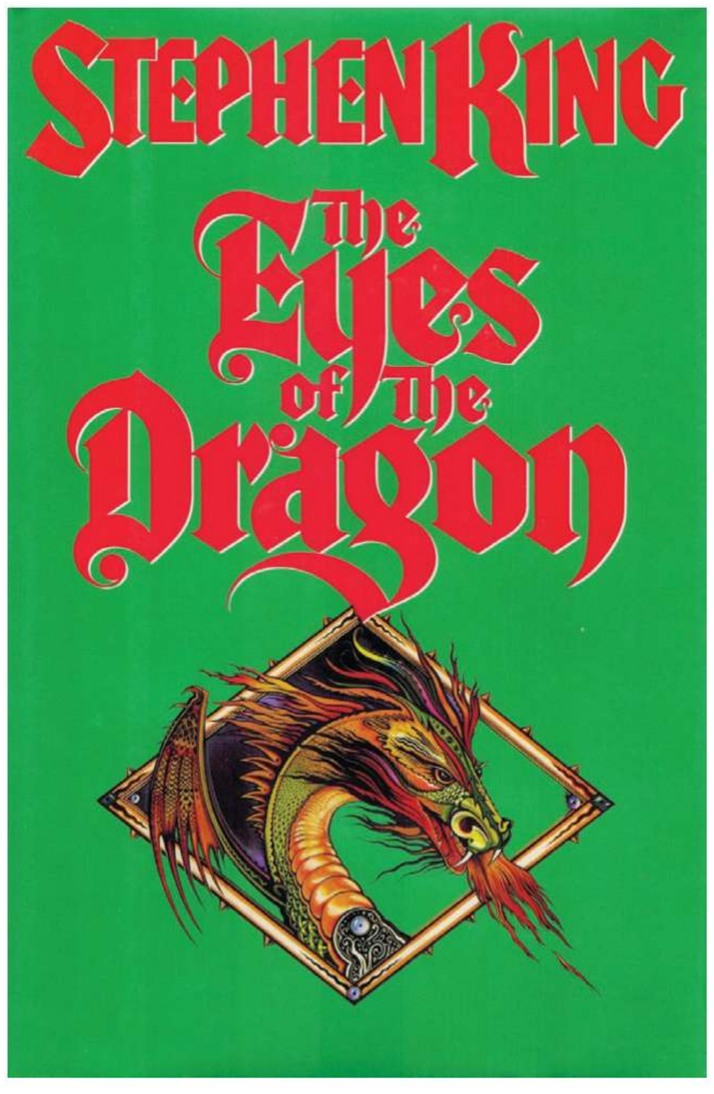


What a shame. *Eyes of The Dragon* ranks among King's very best, and is a great title to recommend to anyone whose kids may be looking to make the jump from YA fiction to something a bit more adult.

The book is set in the fictional kingdom of Delain, where the King's trusted wizard (*The Stand*'s Randall Flagg, in one of his many, many appearances across Stephen King's bibliography) is plotting to commit regicide and install the King's weak, cowardly son Thomas to the throne so that Flagg might secretly rule the entire kingdom. To do this, he must frame and imprison the King's other son, Peter, who spends most of the novel awaiting his fate at the top of an incredibly tall prison tower. Peter knows that he's been framed and needs to clear his name, but to pull that off he'll have to figure out how to escape his imprisonment (the solution to this problem is very clever, indeed) and deal with his brother, who by this point is dangling on puppet strings held and controlled by the evil Flagg. It's a helluva tale!

Last month's *Fairy Tale* feels closer to *Eyes of The Dragon* than anything else King's ever written, a largely straightforward yarn that approaches a number of classic fairy tale characters with a unique, Stephen King twist (just wait'll you see what's become of the Little Mermaid). Of course we all love King because we've spent most of our lives inviting him to scare the bejeezus out of us, but this trio of outstanding fantasy novels proves beyond any reasonable doubt that we should always allow King to follow his muse wherever it leads him, even when the stories aren't as gruesome as so many of his others. At the end of the day, great writing is great writing. 💀

FAIRY TALE REPRESENTS HIS MOST RECENT FORAY INTO THE REALM OF SINISTER CASTLES, STARK RAVING MAD ROYALS, AND FANTASTICAL CREATURES, AND FINDING HIM BACK IN THAT TERRITORY FELT LIKE RECONNECTING WITH AN OLD FRIEND.

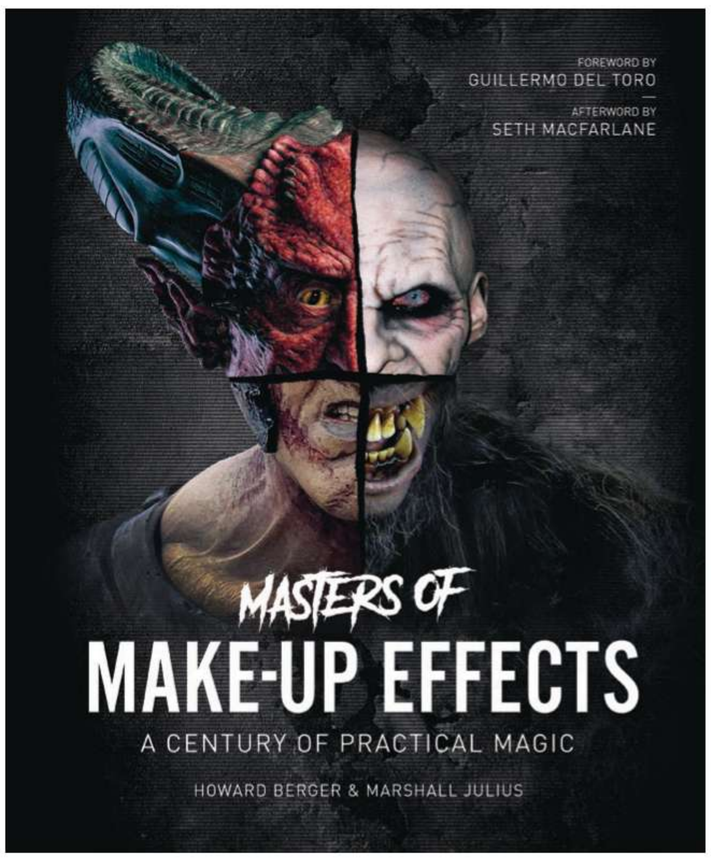


You can listen to Scott Wampler (@ScottWamplerBMD) and Eric Vespe (@EricVespe) every Wednesday on THE KINGCAST (@Kingcast19), a Stephen King podcast for Stephen King obsessives, brought to you by the FANGORIA Podcast Network.

THE KINGCAST

NIGHTMARE LIBRARY

BY AHLISSA EICHHORN



MASTERS OF MAKE-UP EFFECTS: A CENTURY OF PRACTICAL MAGIC

DUE OUT:
9/15/2022

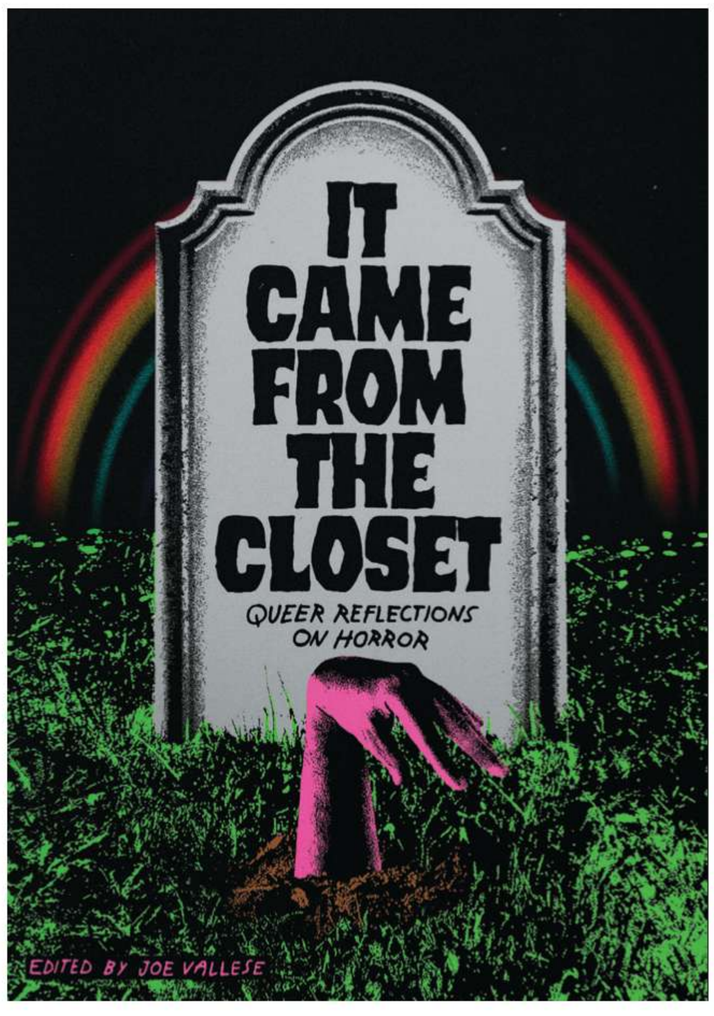
AUTHOR:
Howard Berger & Marshall Julius

PUBLISHER:
Welbeck

It's not farfetched to say that horror fans will always be kids at heart, and that's especially true for the SFX artists who relish in making messes and creating monsters. Howard Berger, Oscar-winning lifer in the makeup game, presents this ode to the art of make-up with a little help from his fellow fiends. Here you'll find recognizable names and extraordinary faces, learn more about your favorite creatures and their hideous origins, and – perhaps best of all – you'll get a closer look at the folks who bring them to life.

It all started with a book: *Making A Monster* (by Al Taylor and Sue Roy) was a tome that never left young Berger's side or mind. After meeting writer Marshall Julius during a fortuitous interview, the itch to put out their own makeup bible began; it only took a pandemic for the team to find the time to pick the brains of fellow artists. From them, they extracted heartfelt advice, memorable sculpts, proud moments, and on-set hijinks. They don't skip over the bad times, either – readers get a glimpse into the hellish experience of filmmaking.

Masters of Make-Up Effects is nothing short of a celebration. The execution is unfussy and retains the freshness of a firsthand account. The book directly speaks to those who count themselves "monster kids," and is permeated with the unique joy such people bring to that fandom.



IT CAME FROM THE CLOSET: QUEER REFLECTIONS ON HORROR

DUE OUT:
10/04/2022

AUTHOR:
Joe Vallese

PUBLISHER:
The Feminist Press

In this stirring anthology, 25 members of the queer community share their truths through the lens of horror films. Inside, you'll see a connection between *The Ring* and ableism. You'll be privy to one author's sibling strain as told by *Dead Ringers*. Mormonism and the all-too-real terror of *Get Out* collide in another story. Ready or not, your perspective is about to be broadened.

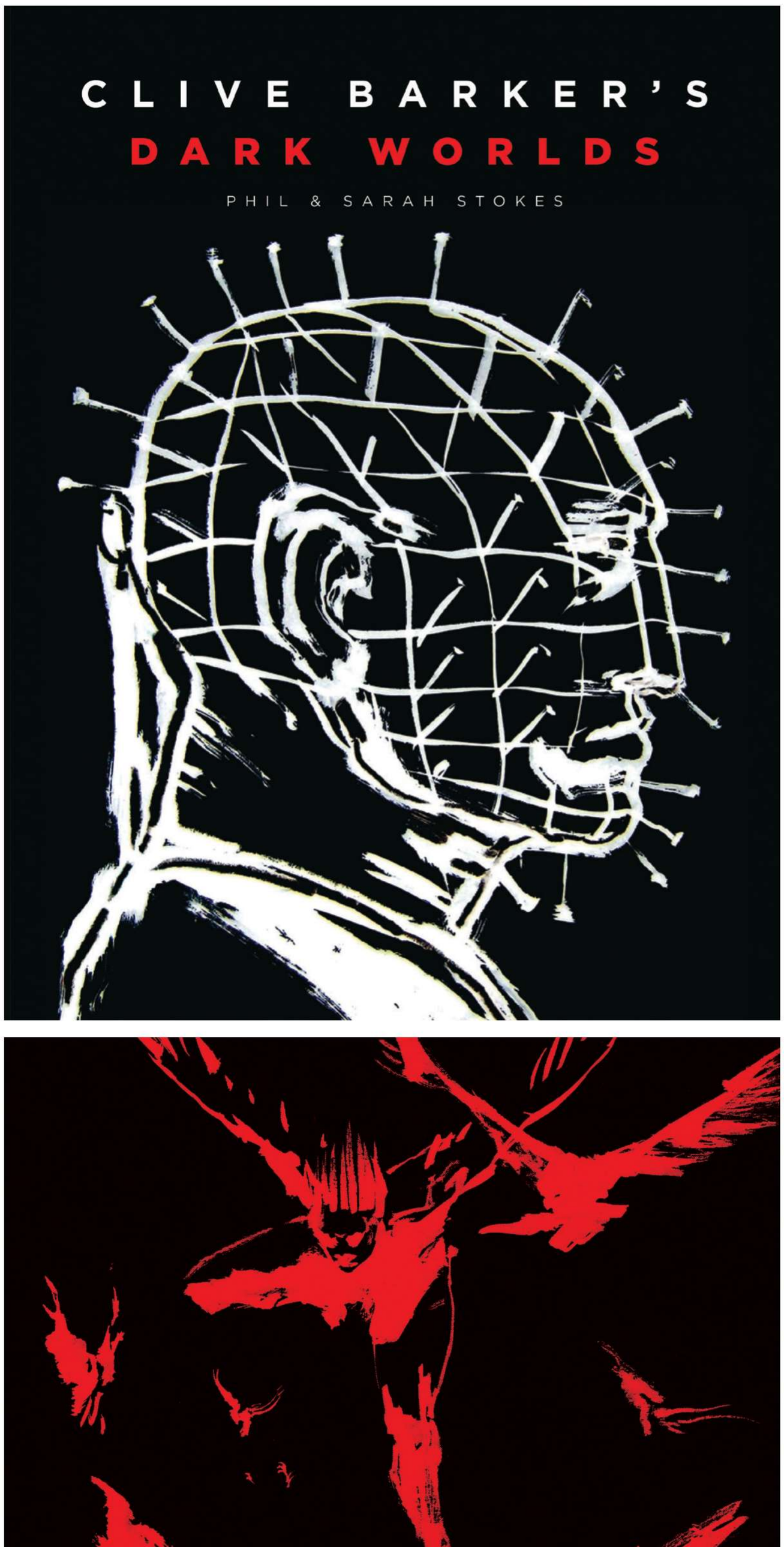
Joe Vallese's ultimate goal for *It Came From The Closet* is to "hold space for both the writers and readers to have difficult, subversive conversations," and he relays why this collection of queer voices is so needed in our circle:

"Though the current horror landscape is slowly telling more queer-centered stories, we largely remain tasked with *reading ourselves* into these films we love, to seek out characters and set pieces that parallel the unique ways in which we encounter, navigate, and occupy the world."

The voices in this book express feelings and experiences that may vastly differ from your own, offering a fantastic growth exercise for all; conversely, you could find a much-needed kindred spirit in these pages. *It Came From The Closet* shows that horror helps to heal and process. It makes sense of harsh realities. It validates identities. And because of that, there's a moment in this book that'll resonate with every single reader – undead, queer, or otherwise.

IT'S MOVING TO SEE HOW THIS CRAZY LITTLE GENRE TRULY IMPACTS PEOPLE.

This horror hub that we've collectively nourished inspires entire careers and hobbies. It shapes and saves lives. Being this type of fan means that, regardless of your differences and preferences, you're always a part of a group, all thanks to one scary, shared interest. The titles below are from fans like you, each divulging and celebrating the impact horror has had on them.



CLIVE BARKER'S DARK WORLDS

DUE OUT:
10/18/2022

AUTHOR:
Phil & Sarah Stokes

PUBLISHER:
Abrams

This venerated biography and art book is an indulgent treat for Clive Barker fans of all kinds. Readers will get firsthand accounts of his uninhibited Liverpool origins. They'll learn of his playwright days and the many inspirations for his art. But film fans need not fret – there's bountiful behind-the-scenes stories from *Nightbreed*, *Lord Of Illusions*, *Candyman* and the *Hellraiser* franchise included here, as well. The icing on this particularly bloody cake? Photos from Barker's personal collection.

A book this meticulous wouldn't have happened without the Stokes. After all, authors Phil and Sarah spent most of their lives working towards it. This imposing project only came to fruition because the duo spent decades cataloging Barker's interviews on their fan website. The drive for such a goal was simple: a need to know who Barker was before his fame, and the need to share it. Their dedication and passion destined them for a partnership with the author. They're now his personal archivists and his dearest friends.

Reading *Dark Worlds* is a strange honor. It's a similar experience to getting corralled onto a sofa and having a scrapbook thrust into your hands. Barker's whole life, bursting with sentimental detail, is pasted into this book. You're expected to be trusted with it, to be comfortable with this sort of vulnerability. A biography this detailed is often done posthumously, but thankfully that isn't the case here. Clive Barker continues to be a roaring spigot of colorful, nightmarish creativity. An eternal imaginer, if you will, whose genre influence knows no human bounds.

Contributors' Crypt

Below are social media handles for some of this issue's contributors. Keep it civil!

Sean Abley - @GayoftheDead

Harmony Colangelo - @Veloci_trap_tor

Jay Cheel - @JayCheel

Kalyn Corrigan - @kalyncorrigan

Barbara Crampton - @barbaracrampton

Ahlissa Eichhorn - @hauntedeadlines

Brett Gallman - @brettgallman

Stephen Graham Jones - @SGJ72

Angel Melanson - @HorrorGirlProbs

Josh Ruben - @joshruben

Scott Wampler - @ScottWamplerBMD

Heather Wixson - @thehorrorchick

CLASSIFIED AD VAULT

MISSING: My beautiful, strong son Jason has not been seen since 2009. We need him back. Headstrong and prone to outbursts, do not approach directly if found.

RIP Trevor Strnad, our nocturnal majesty...

Check out my horror short story collection, Into the Shadows, coming 10/31/22. Details at www.toddbiron.com. Thanks!

The Frankencast is the only podcast all about Frankenstein. It's funny, insightful, and full of heart (stolen from the graveyard).

MISSED CONNECTION: You visited my house and shared a lovely dinner with my family, but before I could make my move you leapt through a window and made it into a passing truck before I could explain my passions to you. Heartbroken in TX.

Amanda you're the only woman who can make me scream. I love you more than you will ever know. your husband Mark XXXOOO

JOB OPENING: Caretaker position at a beautiful resort in the mountains of Colorado. Lasts all winter. Daily responsibilities include maintaining the boiler, trimming hedges, not murdering your family. Contact Horace Derwent at 555-1980.

Gomes! Will you be my date to the fall dance?

Bosch + Ursula = ride or dies 4ever

A lot of Karens think they're Cassandras.

Looking to add a lil buzz to your life? Look no further than Francisco Peppermints Chain Saw Emporium! Big & lil chainsaws, duel-wielding chainsaws, & personalized engravings. Hit up bit.ly/fpeppermints for all your chainsaw needs. And remember, the saw is family.

Candy corn is a Halloween explosion in your mouth. Open wide.

Things to Come

FANGORIA v2 #18 brings the untold story behind one of the greatest horror trailers of all time! Believe it. We'll also have a deep dive on plant-based horror (no, dad, we don't mean vegan food), and that little blonde maniac *M3gan* is bound to turn up. See ya in 2023!

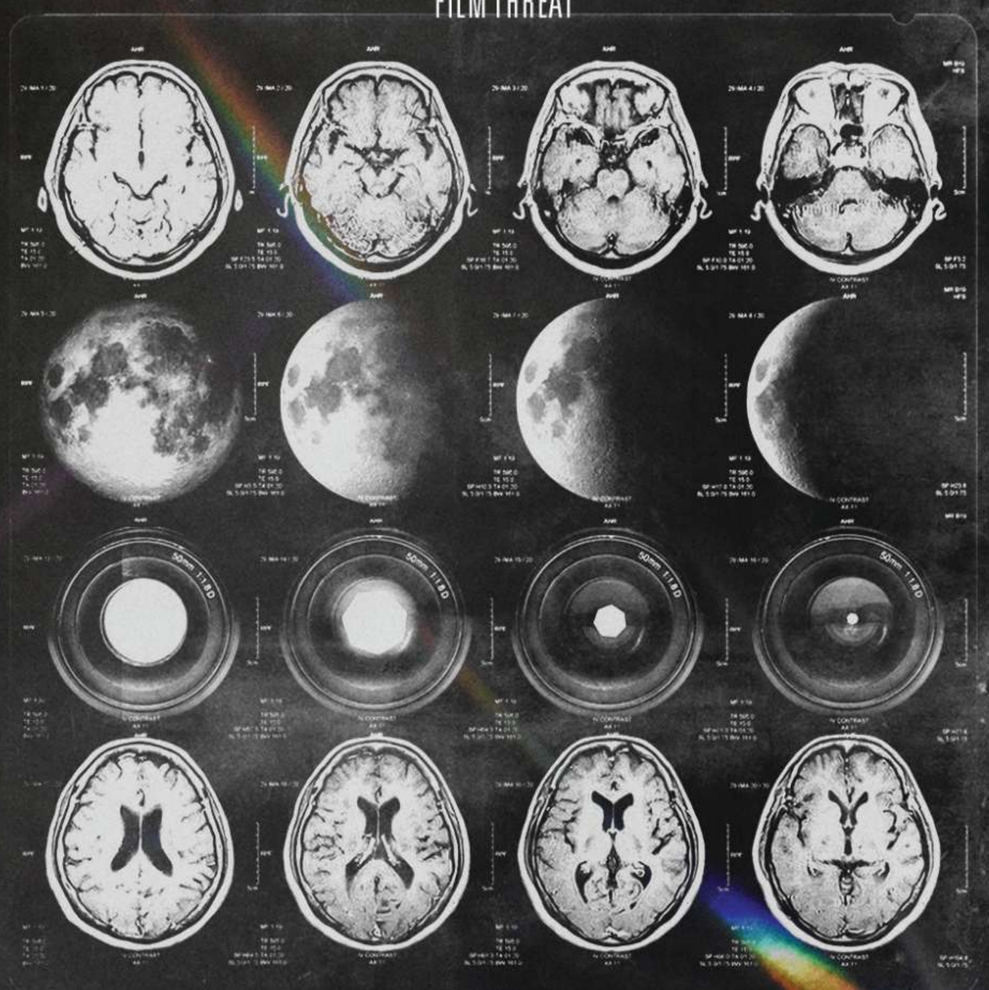
FROM XYZ FILMS

"ONE FOR THE SICKOS
...A SPOOKY PARTY MOVIE MADE BY AND FOR
DERANGED PERVERTS"
SECRET HANDSHAKE

Feed Me

ON DIGITAL & ON DEMAND
OCTOBER 27TH

"MASTERPIECE"
FILM THREAT



SOMETHING IN THE DIRT

IN THEATERS 11/4 AND DIGITAL & ON DEMAND 11/22

"A chilling concept... cleverly reminiscent of A Nightmare On Elm Street"
DAILY DEAD

THE HARBINGER

IN THEATERS, ON DIGITAL & ON DEMAND 12/1

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